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ABSTRACT

This curriculum unit is intended for upper-level high school students. The unit aims for students to gain a basic understanding of the history of Mayan human rights in Guatemala and of the present situation in Guatemala. The unit uses a variety of media and teaching techniques. It lists 30 questions which are to be completed after reading the introductory chapter to "Unfinished Conquest: The Guatemalan Tragedy" by Victor Perera (the chapter is attached). The unit includes information about tourism, Guatemalan customs, and its arts and crafts. In another activity students view and discuss the 1983 film "El Norte." Other activities include translating from Spanish to English a children's picture book; viewing slides about daily life in Guatemala; listening to a tape of one of the 21 Maya languages; and reading and discussing two poems by Humberto Ak'abal, an indigenous Guatemalan poet. (Contains several vocabulary sections and cites seven sources.) (BT)

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Fulbright Seminar Project:

A CurriculumUnit on Human Rights of the Mayas of Guatemala

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by

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Human Rights: the Mayas of Guatemala

Grade: 11 to Adult
This unit would be appropriate for Spanish or social studies classes.

Objectives:
The student will
--gain a basic understanding of the history of Mayan human rights in Guatemala
--understand something about the present situation in Guatemala
--acquire an empathy for immigrants to the U.S. from Latin America and elsewhere.
--realize that people around the world are still fighting and dying for the rights we often take for granted
--begin to understand that language plays a more important part in one's life than people realize.
--try to relate their newfound understanding of the Maya's situation to that of the minority group(s) of their own locale.

Strategies and Materials:
This unit will be carried out using a variety of media and teaching techniques. Students will read and discuss background information, they will view a film as well as teacher-generated slides, they will listen to tapes and view written samples of Mayan languages, they will translate, from Spanish to English, part of a children's book about indigenous human rights

Human Rights: The Mayas of Guatemala

I. Students will read the introductory chapter to the book Unfinished Conquest, The Guatemalan Tragedy by Victor Perera. (copy attached)

Study Questions and Vocabulary: (Answers may be written out or discussed orally, or both)

1. In what specific fields of knowledge did the Mayas have an especially advanced civilization?

2. What happened to hundreds of Mayan books? Why?

3. What is the Popol Vuh?

4. Where did the Mayas go after they abandoned their earlier sites?

5. How many Mayan linguistic communities exist today?

6. Whose name has become "synonymous with the bloodiest chapter in the Conquest of the Americas?" Why?

7. How did Alvarado exploit the Mayan groups to conquer them?

8. What did the Mayas believe when the saw the Spaniards on horseback?
9. What group of Mayas mounted the earliest form of guerilla warfare against the Spaniards? What was one of their techniques?

10. More Mayas died from disease than from warfare, according to the author and others. What were some of the diseases brought to the New World by the Europeans?

11. What social hierarchy was established in Guatemala that still exists today?

12. How have the Mayas maintained many of their ancient beliefs and customs?

13. In 1541, the Guatemalan capital was moved to what city?

14. What were three characteristics of the colonial era that still persist today?

15. How was labor provided once the land was divided into haciendas?

16. Who was instrumental in the abolition of the encomiendas? What was his attitude toward the indigenous peoples?

17. Describe repartimiento, which replaced the system of encomiendas.

18. What was the effect of congregación?

19. "The large landowners of Guatemala represent less than _____ percent of Guatemala's population but control over _____ percent of the arable land."

20. What activity "is at the heart of the Maya's conception of himself?"

21. What were the results of Justo Rufino Barrios' abolishment of hundreds of Mayan land titles in the 1870's?

22. What did the vagrancy laws of 1934 require?

23. What are the first, second and potential third chapters of the conquest of Guatemala's indigenous population, according to the author?

24. What has been the cost in lives of the war in Guatemala that began in the early 60's?

25. The outcome of the war might have been different if the three main guerilla organizations had been able to do what?

26. What were the first real signs of peace in Guatemala?

27. What is one result of the war as far as land is concerned?

28. What has been a surprising religious outcome of the war?

29. Who is Rigoberta Menchú?

30. What is the proper terminology to refer to indigenous people?

Vocabulary - Find the meaning for the following Spanish terms in the reading:

1. altiplano
2. criollo
3. ladino
4. caciques
5. principales
6. costumbre
7. cofradía
8. haciendas
   hacendados
9. encomiendas
   encomendero
10. repartimiento
11. congregación
12. latifundistas
13. milpas
14. desaparecer

Introduction

"And as I observed their ill will toward the service of his Majesty, and for the good benefit of this country, I burned them and ordered that the city be burned to its foundation."

Pedro de Alvarado, letter to Carlos V of Spain

One month after the conquistador of Guatemala, Cortés's blond captain Pedro de Alvarado, was crushed under a horse during a campaign in Nochiztlán, Mexico, rainwater spilled over the crater of majestic Agua volcano and flooded the newly founded capital of Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala. Among the hundreds of Spaniards buried by the mud slides and the ensuing earthquake was the grieving widow of Pedro de Alvarado, who had dubbed herself "Doña Beatriz the Unlucky." The opening chapter of the Conquest of Guatemala ended as it began, in a violent convulsion.

Five hundred years before the arrival of the Spaniards, the Mayas who built the great temples at Tikal, Palenque, and Yaxchilán abandoned their cities for reasons that continue to mystify scholars. They left behind the majestic shells of what was probably the most advanced civilization to have ever flourished on the American continent. Only fragments of their achievements in mathematics, philosophy, astronomy, and calendrical science survived at the time of first contact with the European invaders. Many of those fragments went up in flames in the infamous auto-da-fé celebrated in 1562 by Yucatán's Bishop Diego de Landa in the plaza of Maní. As the climax to his personal and unauthorized inquisition into Indian heresy, Landa burned possibly hundreds of hieroglyphic Mayan books and codices, which he denounced as "superstitions and falsehoods of the devil."

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A remnant of what may have been the Mayas' equivalent to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* surfaced in highland Guatemala in the sixteenth century as the *Popol Vuh*, or "Book of Council." Composed in Quiché Maya and rendered in the Spanish alphabet, the *Popol Vuh* recounts the migrations of the Quichés' ancestors to Guatemala from their ancient capital of Tula in the Mexican highlands. Another, perhaps older section of the *Popol Vuh* recounts the adventures of the heroic wizard twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanqué, who defeat the Death Lords of the Maya underworld, Xibalbá, and initiate the present cycle of creation. A growing body of evidence suggests that the twins' epic encounters inspired the symbolic chthonic journeys undertaken by the *Ahauob*, the philosopher kings of the classical Maya era.

After the ancient Mayan sites were abandoned, many of the survivors dispersed to what is today Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, while others made their way to the highlands of Chiapas and Guatemala, dividing into the thirty or so warring kingdoms of the post-classic Maya era. Today's twenty-one Mayan linguistic communities, headed by the Quichés, the Cakchiquels, the Tz'utujils, the Mams, and the Quekchis, are descended from the warring kingdoms of the post-classic Mayas.

At the time of first contact with the Europeans, the highlands of Guatemala were rent by internal dissensions caused by the break-up of the powerful Quiché empire, whose king, Quicab the Great, had ruled over approximately 26,000 square kilometers of high plains, or *altiplano*, and collected tribute from more than one million subjects.

Captain Pedro de Alvarado was commissioned by his commander Hernán Cortés to explore the territories making up present-day Guatemala and to "endeavor with the greatest care to bring the people to peace without war and to preach matters concerning our holy faith." In the performance of his commission the mercurial, rapacious Alvarado strayed so far from his commander's behest that his Indian name, Tonatiuh, meaning "sun"—a reference to his blond hair and beard—has become synonymous with the bloodiest chapter in the Conquest of the Americas.

In 1523 Captain Alvarado climbed to the altiplano from the Pacific with 120 horsemen, 300 foot soldiers, and several hundred Mexican auxiliaries from Cholula and Tlascala. They were accompanied by two priests, Juan Godinez and Juan Díaz. Alvarado's expedition met

scant resistance until it reached the plains near present-day Quezaltenango (Xelahú), where it was met by a large army of Quichés led by their king, Tecún Umán, grandson of Quicab the Great. Had the Quichés persuaded their neighboring Cakchiquels and Tz'utujils to join them in repelling the Spaniards, the Conquest might have had a different and more complicated denouement. But the Cakchiquels still smarted from decades of harsh treatment by the Quichés, who had exacted exorbitant tributes, and both nations were distrusted by the Tz'utujils, who had fought bitterly to defend their territories on Lake Atitlán. Alvarado cleverly exploited these animosities to divide and conquer the altiplano.

The Quiché warriors, who greatly outnumbered the invading Spaniards, gave a good account of themselves, fighting the armored foot soldiers toe-to-toe with obsidian-tipped arrows, lances, spears, and leather shields. The Maya warriors feared the Spanish mastiffs and the cavalry far more than their steel weapons or their light artillery. In the Spaniards' version, the sight of man and horse merged in a single terrifying beast persuaded many of the Quichés—as it had the Aztecs before them—that they were locked in battle with superhuman beings. According to a colonial Quiché document cited by Victoria Bricker [1981], Tecún Umán was a great sorcerer who "flew up like an eagle" and vanquished Alvarado when he thrust his lance at his mount, beheading it in one stroke. But the unscathed Alvarado instead passed his own steel lance through the heart of Tecún Umán. With the Quiché king lying mortally wounded on the ground, the battle was soon decided in the Spaniards' favor. The sight of the noble Tecún Umán covered in quetzal feathers and crowns of gold, silver, and precious stones profoundly moved Alvarado, according to the Quiché documents. In a gesture of deference toward his adversary, Alvarado stopped his mastiffs from tearing apart the fallen monarch and returned the body to his subjects for burial. Alvarado named the site of battle Quezaltenango in honor of Tecún Umán.

Alvarado's own chronicle drily reports the death of "one of the four lords of Utatlán who was captain-general of this realm." The conquistador's ruthlessness would reassert itself in his next encounter with the Quichés, when they attempted to lure the Spaniards into their fortress capital of Gumarcaah (Utatlán) and ambush them. Sensing a trap, Alvarado stopped his troops at the entrance to the citadel.

He ordered the capture of the Quiché kings and nobles, strung them up to high posts, and burned them alive, ignoring their pleas for mercy.

The defeat of the Quiches was followed by Alvarado's betrayal of the Cakchiquels, whom he first befriended and recruited to brutally subdue their enemies, the Tz'utujils. Having disposed of the Cakchiquels' enemies, Alvarado founded the first Spanish colonial capital beside the Cakchiquel's citadel at Iximché, near present-day Tecpán. Wasting no time, he ordered their kings to hand over one thousand loaves of gold weighing fifteen *pesos* each. Stunned by the abrupt turn in Tonatiuh's amicable disposition, the Cakchiquels balked, pleading with him to lower the tribute. Infuriated by their demurral, Alvarado threatened to hang and burn the kings if they did not meet his demands in full within five days. "Woe to you if you do not bring it!" he shouted. "I know my heart!"

Alvarado's execution of Cakchiquel nobles and his numerous other abuses recorded in the *Annals of the Cakchiquels* provoked the first uprising against Spanish domination. The Cakchiquels fled to the mountains, where for four years they engaged in an early form of guerrilla warfare against the Spaniards. They dug pits with pointed stakes that caused the death of many horses. But the conquering Spaniards would not be denied. Alvarado captured the rebel Cakchiquel kings one by one and hung them in the central plaza. After quelling the rebellion the Spaniards concluded that Iximché was no longer safe; they set fire to the majestic temples, palaces, and courtyards and relocated their ill-fated capital of Santiago de los Caballeros to the valley of Almolonga.

In the following years Alvarado and his lieutenants subdued each of the remaining Mayan kingdoms of the altiplano, conducting further massacres and stifling all resistance with their habitual brutality. The last to be brought under Spanish domination was the Kingdom of Tayasal, situated in the northern forests of Petén, which was not secured until 1697.

Estimates of the numbers of Mayas killed by the Spaniards vary widely. In his *Very Brief History of the Destruction of the Indies*, published shortly after Alvarado's death, Friar Bartolomé de las Casas accused him of killing 5 million Indians and "committing enormities sufficient to fill a particular volume, so many were the slaughters, violences, injuries, butcheries, and beastly desolations." Although the

substance of las Casas's denunciation is beyond dispute, modern scholars calculate that no more than 2 million Mayas inhabited Guatemala at the time of first contact. As many as 750,000 may have died from plague, violence, and other Conquest-related causes in the first decades after the Spaniards arrived. Another million Mayas had died of European diseases by the middle of the seventeenth century. For all the righteous indignation of the saintly Friar de las Casas, the truth is that smallpox, yellow fever, influenza, diphtheria, and a host of other diseases unknown to the New World killed several times more Mayas than the most sanguinary of conquistadores ever intended to.

Las Casas lived long enough to witness the establishment of the social hierarchy that persists in Guatemala to the present day: European (*criollo*) landowners and generals dominating the mixed-blood (*ladino*) administrators and officers, who in turn oppress the lowly Mayan campesinos, often through Indian intermediaries in the guise of labor contractors, pastors, army sergeants, and municipal officers. The Spaniards named their Indian proxies—most of whom were former *caciques* or chieftains—*principales*, and set them above their fellows by extending them privileges and favors they denied to their communities. This was an early example of a continuing practice by the ruling criollo and ladino establishment to eradicate the Mayas' identity by co-opting and "ladinicizing" their leaders.

Despite the concerted efforts of criollos and ladinos, the Mayas have safeguarded many of their ancient customs by assimilating them with Iberian Catholicism into a system of syncretic beliefs and rituals they call *costumbre*. The main repository of costumbre is the *cofradía*, or brotherhood, that has endured in many highland Mayan communities for over 450 years. The original cofradías imported from Spain were craft and labor guilds, governed by a patron saint or virgin. The Mayas transformed them into religious sodalities that practiced animal sacrifices and pre-Columbian prayer ceremonies under the guise of Catholic saint-worship. Cofradías in the more remote communities still have shamans who observe the traditional Maya calendar. These "day-keepers" call on the powers inherent in each of the twenty name-days in order to heal the sick, invoke beneficent spirits, and—in extreme cases—cast spells on their enemies.

One year after Volcán Agua devastated Santiago and the Almolonga Valley in 1541, the Spanish capital was moved to what is now Antigua, Guatemala, in the valley of Panchoy. The move inaugurated the three-hundred-year colonial era, whose rigid hierarchical structures, feudal patterns of land ownership, and ruthless exploitation of Mayan communities persist, in modified form, to the present day.

In the territory governed by the city of Santiago, the sixteenth-century colonial capital of Guatemala, the task of converting the hundreds of thousands of Indian subjects was divided among the Franciscan, Dominican, and Mercedarian missions, while the conquered lands were carved up by Alvarado's officers into vast estates, or *haciendas*. Indigo, cochineal, and cacao were cultivated in the humid lowlands and highland foothills, while cattle ranching predominated in the temperate highlands and the dry Oriente. The labor to work these estates was provided by royal grants or *encomiendas*, which gave the *hacendado* full title to the Indian serfs living on the estate.

The practice of encomienda dated from the *Reconquista* in Spain, when the victorious Spaniards recruited vanquished Moors as serfs to work their Andalusian haciendas. Even so staunch a defender of Indian rights as Friar Bartolomé de las Casas was an *encomendero* for a time, during his sojourn in Cuba. The encomenderos' peons not only had to work without pay but also had to render tribute to their masters in the form of produce, poultry, and woven goods.

Las Casas was instrumental in the abolition of the encomiendas. In 1537 he prevailed on Carlos V to introduce a more humane treatment of his Indian subjects by gathering them around mission churches, where they would receive proper religious instruction. Las Casas's revolutionary precept that Indians were not inferior by nature but were instead "infants of the faith" made a deep impression on Carlos V. In 1542 the monarch incorporated las Casas's ideas into a more humane code of New Laws for the Spanish colonies. Las Casas put his precepts to work in the formerly war-torn regions of the eastern highlands, where he pacified the Quekchi Mayas with the introduction of Dominican missions. These eastern highland regions came to be known as Verapaz, lands of True Peace. Four hundred and fifty years later the military's war of counterinsurgency caught up with Baja and Alta Verapaz, killing several thousand of

its Mayan residents and turning tens of thousands of others into refugees.

Las Casas's sworn enemies, the intemperate conquistadores and their immediate descendants, used their influence in court to ensure that the New Laws would be short lived. After the death of las Casas the encomiendas were replaced by *repartimiento*, a system of forced labor that included a negligible wage.

To facilitate the Catholic missions' labor of converting the Mayas, as well as to provide additional serfs and tribute, the scattered communities outside the encomiendas were concentrated together through a process called *congregación*. After the first uprisings by abused laborers and tribute slaves a second congregación was aimed at breaking communal bonds by gathering the rebels from dispersed regions into closely supervised *pueblos indios*. This strategy would serve as an inspiration for the model village program introduced by the Guatemalan military in the 1980s to pacify insurgent highland Mayan communities in the Ixil Triangle, the Ixcán, and other "Zones of Conflict." In both cases, the forced nucleation of idiosyncratic Mayan communities not only undermined their cultural identity but also inflicted severe economic and environmental hardships.

Severo Martínez and other historians have written of the centuries-long tug of war for political influence and privilege between the peninsular Spaniards loyal to the throne and the *criollos*, or New World Spaniards, whose Indian mistresses birthed the first mixed-breed *ladinos*. Beneath the ladinos in status were the Indian *principales* chosen to keep order and collect tribute from the lowly peasants, who were and continue to be the most cruelly exploited native underclass in the Americas. (Colonial Mayas accepted las Casas's term *naturales* in place of the criollos' demeaning *indio*, *mozo*, and *peón*. *Naturales* is still widely used among highland Mayas.)

With occasional alterations, this hierarchical infrastructure remained in place throughout the colonial era, and with some twentieth-century refinements it continues to be operative. About three hundred large landowning families still represent the criollo interests, now in growing competition with an influential business and industrial elite. Along the Pacific coast, where coffee remained Guatemala's chief export crop for over a century, sugarcane, bananas, cotton, and, more recently, cardamom have replaced the colonial plantations of indigo,

cochineal, and cacao. These large landholders (*latifundistas*) represent less than 2 percent of Guatemala's population but control over 65 percent of the arable land.

The traditional ladino role is now embodied by the army officer class and by the expanding middle class whose breadwinners fill white- and blue-collar occupations. Today's Maya principales tend to be more independent than their colonial forebears; they are often small landowners, tradesmen, municipal officers, and more recently the mayors of small towns and villages throughout the upper highlands.

The fortunes of the campesinos who worked as tenant farmers and manual laborers remained remarkably unchanged for over three and a half centuries—as attested to in the writings of travelers Thomas Gage, John Lloyd Stephens, Jackson Steward Lincoln, among others.

The system of encomienda and congregación was porous enough to allow hundreds of Mayan communities to go on farming their *milpas*, or cornfields, and to retain ownership of ancestral lands. In these remote outposts, the cultivation of corn remained a sacrament that linked the Maya farmer to his gods. The preparation and planting of a milpa, in times of plenty as well as in times of want, is at the heart of the Maya's conception of himself. This situation would change in the second half of the nineteenth century, after a sustained peasant rebellion against colonial and post-independence structures and institutions. The uprising was headed by the mestizo, or mixed-breed, cacique Rafael Carrera, whose invasions of fincas and assaults on the capital with hordes of Maya campesinos brought the criollos and ladinos face to face with their worst fears. These fears appeared to be substantiated when Carrera seized control of the government in 1840 and ruled the country directly and through puppet presidents during the next three decades.

Carrera was tamed to some degree by his alliance with the conservative Catholic church, and his thirty-year dominance left the landowning elites shaken but unmoved. The most radical change in Mayan communal land tenure came about a decade after Carrera's passing with the ascendancy of the self-styled Liberal Reformer, Justo Rufino Barrios. Beginning in the late 1870s, Barrios passed debt-peonage statutes and abolished hundreds of Mayan land titles in order to create an army of seasonal laborers for the huge coffee fincas that were springing up along Guatemala's Pacific piedmont. In 1884 alone, more

than one hundred thousand acres of Maya-owned municipal lands passed into private hands. Hundreds of thousands of indigenous farmers who had never traveled more than a few kilometers from their milpas were conscripted to work in the coastal fincas as coffee pickers and peons.

Guatemala's agricultural elite has good reason to commemorate Justo Rufino Barrios as their great benefactor, and Guatemala's Mayan communities have equal reason to revile the memory of their greatest scourge after Pedro de Alvarado. The "Liberal Reformer's" lasting legacy was a thriving coffee-centered economy that controlled 14 percent of the world trade by 1905 and accounted for 85 percent of Guatemala's annual export revenues. Barrios's undermining of the milpa-based Mayan culture proved just as enduring. By the 1920s the growing taste for coffee in North America and Europe created the first millionaire fortunes in Guatemala at the same time that land-poverty became institutionalized in the Mayan highlands. Barrios's statutes remained on the books until 1934, when the "benevolent dictator" Jorge Ubico replaced them with vagrancy laws that obligated all campesinos owning less than three *manzanas* (two hectares) to do manual labor for a minimum of one hundred days a year. This assured plantation owners vast reserves of migrant laborers for their coffee and sugar harvests. Paradoxically, the new vagrancy statutes also planted the seeds of Mayan resistance; in the mid-nineteen-fifties, they led to the formation of the first peasant unions under presidents Arévalo and Arbenz.

Many historians now regard Barrios and the rise of the coffee fincas as the second chapter of the conquest and exploitation of Guatemala's indigenous population. The third and potentially final chapter may have begun in the late seventies with the massive counterinsurgency campaign mounted by the first of three military presidents, Romeo Lucas García. The total cost of the war that began in the early sixties with the rise of the first guerrilla organizations is now calculated at 120,000 Guatemalans killed, and another 46,000 disappeared and unaccounted for. (The transitive verb "*desaparecer*" [to disappear] originated in Guatemala.)

Although the leftist guerrillas who incited the most bloody military reprisals in Central America's history probably never numbered more

than seventy-five hundred trained militants, they succeeded in recruiting close to half a million peasant supporters in the western and central highlands and in the northern department of El Petén. Had the three main guerrilla organizations, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Revolutionary Organization of People in Arms (ORPA), and the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), been able to coordinate and arm their enormous followings, this would have been a far different story. In 1982 these three organizations banded together with the military arm of the Guatemalan Workers Party (PGT) to form the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG); but by then the guerrillas' best opportunities had already passed. Everyone underestimated the tenacity and ruthlessness of the ladino military officer class, which had been tempered by five centuries of subservience to criollo landowning elites.

The first real prospect of an end to Guatemala's war arose with the Esquipulas Peace negotiations held in Guatemala in 1986 and 1987 under the auspices of President Cerezo. The five Central American presidents signed agreements that disarmed the Contras in Nicaragua and provided the framework for peace negotiations between government and guerrilla leaders in El Salvador and Guatemala. (In 1987 Costa Rica's former president Oscar Arias received the Nobel Peace Prize for his skillful diplomacy.) In 1991 the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front and President Alfredo Cristiani signed a peace accord in El Salvador that is not yet fully implemented. Guatemala's military and government representatives have engaged in ongoing negotiations with leaders of the URNG for the past three years. Despite sporadic signs of progress, negotiations have repeatedly stalled over the issue of accountability for human rights violations and the prosecution of the war.

2

More than any other country in the Central American isthmus, Guatemala sits on the cusp of interlocking contradictions. At 9.5 million, Guatemala is the most populous of the six Central American republics, the richest in natural resources, and it attracts the most investment dollars from the United States and the large multinational corporations in Europe and the Far East. And yet its Maya majority of nearly

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5 million has the lowest per capita income in the region. (A study published in 1991 by the National Institute of Statistics revealed that 90 percent of highland residents live in conditions of extreme poverty.) Guatemala is the Central American country closest to our borders, yet it is by far the most neglected by the U.S. media. After the overthrow of democratically elected Jacobo Arbenz in 1954, a curtain of silence descended over Guatemala. The country and its war, which has lasted more than thirty years, have remained largely invisible, even to North Americans who defy the State Department's negative travel advisories and fly to the Mayan ruins of Tikal or visit the artisans' markets of Atitlán and Chichicastenango.

An important part of this story is the role played by Israel, Taiwan, Argentina, and other arms dealers who replaced the United States for four crucial years as suppliers of weapons and technical assistance to the Guatemalan military. In 1977 Guatemala stopped importing arms from the United States in anticipation of a credit ban from President Jimmy Carter, who deplored Guatemala's abysmal record of human rights abuse. Direct U.S. military aid began again in the early eighties, under Ronald Reagan.

One major result of the war is a shift in the power balance that has created a new landowning elite among military officers, who are proclaiming themselves the victors of a war that has by no means ended.

A remarkable product of Guatemala's war is the rise of a Protestant evangelical movement imported from the United States, which has already converted over one-third of Guatemala's nominally Catholic indigenous population. The early Protestant missions in Guatemala allied themselves with authoritarian Liberal governments, beginning with that of Justo Rufino Barrios. Until the rise of the communist specter in the early 1950s, the impact of these traditional Protestant churches on the Catholic Mayan communities had been negligible. The century-long influx of missionaries from traditional Protestant churches as well as the newer fundamentalist and Pentecostal sects crested into flood tide following the devastating earthquake of February 1976, which left over 27,000 dead and hundreds of thousands injured and homeless. The large majority of the quake victims lived

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in the highland Mayan departments of Chimaltenango and Quiché, which had borne the brunt of Alvarado's cruelty. Beginning in the late 1970s, these two departments would also become the prime targets of Alvarado's descendants, the criollo and mestizo generals who planned Guatemala's counterinsurgency strategy in the Mayan highlands.

The evangelicals who came to Guatemala to comfort and rehabilitate the survivors of the earthquake remained behind to convert them. Hundreds of temples associated with churches like the Central American Mission, Elim, Assemblies of God, and the Nazarenes rose from the rubble of Catholic churches leveled by the big quake. Mayan communities disillusioned with their priests' offers of heavenly rewards flocked to the new sects, drawn by promises of redemption through prayer, puritanical temperance, and individual enterprise. In the areas the army calls Zones of Conflict, thousands of survivors were drawn to the exorcistic rituals and millennialist prophecies of the Pentecostals, whose histrionic services placated their fears and helped them forget the loss of their relatives.

As the war widened under evangelical General Efraín Ríos Montt, who seized the presidency in a bloodless palace coup in March 1982, the agendas of many evangelical missions expanded to include wider geopolitical objectives. Ríos Montt's own Church of the Word, an offshoot of the California-based Gospel Outreach, planned to secure the countryside for a military occupation friendly to the United States. Evangelical groups like Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship became bulwarks of the Reagan Doctrine and waged holy war against the "diabolical" tenets of Marxism-Leninism and Liberation Theology. Many evangelicals openly boasted that Guatemala was to be the bridgehead for a Protestant takeover of Latin America, to be completed in time for Christ's Second Coming at the end of the millennium.

Once again, as in the early years of the Spanish Conquest, when three missionary Catholic orders competed for the salvation of Indian souls, war and religious conversion worked hand in glove to effect a profound transformation of the native Mayan culture. The devil of idol worship had been replaced by the devil of communism and Marxist theology. To the long-suffering descendants of the Mayas, who believed in interrelated time segments of *tuns* and *katuns* that recur

in predetermined cycles, the wheel had turned full circle, and only the masks on the white faces had changed.

Once each year over the past four and a half centuries, highland residents have celebrated their patron saint feast days with a Dance of the Conquest. Hand-picked villagers stoke themselves with cheap rum and deck themselves out in the burgundy and green velvet finery of sixteenth-century Spaniards. In some versions of the dance, a participant will wear a brown or black-tinted mask of Tecún Umán. The charade is topped off by subtly crafted rose-and-cream wooden masks with blond beards and mustaches. For hours on end, the masked villagers move back and forth, shaking gourd rattles as they high-step and gyrate in random configuration to the strains of a marimba, tirelessly reenacting their ancestors'—and their own—defeat and humiliation.

In this book, I will focus on four highland regions where guerrilla insurgency, military counterinsurgency, and evangelical conversion had the most dramatic impact on traditional Mayan patterns of subsistence—the Ixil Triangle, Atitlán, Huehuetenango, and Chimaltenango. A separate section deals with the northern lowland region of Petén, where the Rebel Armed Forces have been concentrated. The radical transformation of these communities has taken on the character of a third conquest, whose full parameters are only now becoming apparent. Because the transformation of these areas—and of Guatemala itself—by the most underreported war of recent times is multifaceted, its story will be told in a layered format of journalistic reportage, personal narrative, oral testimony, and ethnographic investigation.

With the resurgence of a native Maya movement in Guatemala, marked by congressional approval of a standardized Maya alphabet and the more recent ratification of the Academy of Mayan Languages, the colonial pejorative *indio* (Indian) has, justifiably, fallen into disrepute. The award of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize to the Quiché-Maya human rights activist Rigoberta Menchú has cast further opprobrium on colonial terminology and on the term *indio*, in particular. As a general rule, *Indian* will refer only to newly Christianized and colonial Mayas, and *Maya* or *Mayan* will refer to that pre-Columbian civilization as well as to the renaissant indigenous communities that are its direct descendants.

II. Students will read and discuss the Introduction (pages x-xvii) and Chapters IV and VII of I, Rigoberta Menchú. (copy attached)

Discussion Questions:

Introduction (pp. x-xvii)

1. What does the author mean when she says that Rigoberta Menchú "speaks for all the Indians of the American continent"?

2. Discuss the importance of language to Rigoberta's people and to Rigoberta herself.

3. What is Rigoberta Menchú fighting for?

4. What are the staple foods of Guatemala? How did food form a bond between the author and Rigoberta?

5. Discuss the irony of the following statements: "The ladinos have adopted many features of the indigenous culture . . . They inevitably use the native cultures of Latin America to proclaim their otherness and have aways tended to adopt the great monuments of the Aztec, Mayan and Incan pre-columbian civilizations as their own, without ever establishing any connection between the splendors of the past and the poor exploited Indians they despise and treat as slaves."
(View travel brochures and ads to illustrate the point)
(copies attached)

Chapter IV "First Visit to the Finca. Life in the Finca"
(pp. 21-27)

1. Describe Rigoberta's first memories of traveling to the finca.

2. Who are the caporales? What is their position?

3. Describe how the workers are fed.

4. How does the cantina operate?

5. How do the overseers cheat the workers to make more money?

6. Explain how Rigoberta and her people "voted."

Chapter VII "Death of Her Little Brother in the Finca.
Difficulty of Communicating with Other Indians"
(pp. 38-42)

1. What problems did Rigoberta's mother encounter in burying her brother's body? What was the result?

2. How did the community help them?

3. How did language compound the problems the workers faced?

4. How do the overseers rob the workers of their rightful pay?

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INTRODUCTION

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Rigoberta Menchú is twenty-three years old. She tells her story in Spanish, a language which she has spoken for only three years. Her life story is an account of contemporary history rather than of Guatemala itself. It is in that sense that it is exemplary: she speaks for all the Indians of the American continent. What she tells us of her relationship with nature, life, death and her community has already been said by the Indians of North America, those of Central America and those of South America. The cultural discrimination she has suffered is something that all the continent's Indians have been suffering ever since the Spanish conquest. The voice of Rigoberta Menchú allows the defeated to speak. She is a privileged witness: she has survived the genocide that destroyed her family and community and is stubbornly determined to break the silence and to confront the systematic extermination of her people. She refuses to let us forget. Words are her only weapons. That is why she resolved to learn Spanish and break out of the linguistic isolation into which the

Indians retreated in order to preserve their culture.

Rigoberta learned the language of her oppressors in order to use it against them. For her, appropriating the Spanish language is an act which can change the course of history because it is the result of a decision. Spanish was a language which was forced upon her, but it has become a weapon in her struggle. She decided to speak in order to tell of the oppression her people have been suffering for almost five hundred years, so that the sacrifices made by her community and her family will not have been made in vain.

She will not let us forget and insists on showing us what we have always refused to see. We Latin Americans are only too ready to denounce the unequal relations that exist between ourselves and North America, but we tend to forget that we too are oppressors and that we too are involved in relations that can only be described as *colonial*. Without any fear of exaggeration, it could be said that, especially in countries with a large Indian population, there is an internal colonialism which works to the detriment of the indigenous population. The ease with which North America dominates so-called 'Latin' America is to a large extent a result of the collusion afforded it by this internal colonialism. So long as these relations persist, the countries of Latin America will not be countries in any real sense of the word, and they will therefore remain vulnerable. That is why we have to listen to Rigoberta Menchú's appeal and allow ourselves to be guided by a voice whose inner cadences are so pregnant with meaning that we actually seem to hear her speaking and can almost hear her breathing. Her voice is so heart-rendingly beautiful because it speaks to us of every facet of the life of a people and their oppressed culture. But Rigoberta Menchú's story does not consist solely of heart-rending moments. Quietly, but proudly, she leads us into her own cultural world, a world in which the sacred and the profane constantly mingle, in which worship and domestic life are one and the same, in which every gesture has a pre-established purpose and in which everything has a meaning. Within that culture, everything is determined in advance; everything that occurs in the present can be explained in terms of the past and has to be ritualized so as to be integrated into everyday life, which is itself a ritual. As we listen to her voice, we have to look deep into our own souls for it awakens sensations and feelings which we, caught up as we are in an inhuman and artificial world, thought were lost for ever. Her story is

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overwhelming because what she has to say is simple and true. As she speaks, we enter a strikingly different world which is poetic and often tragic, a world which has forged the thought of a great popular leader. In telling the story of her life, Rigoberta Menchu is also issuing a manifesto on behalf of an ethnic group. She proclaims her allegiance to that group, but she also asserts her determination to subordinate her life to one thing. As a popular leader, her one ambition is to devote her life to overthrowing the relations of domination and exclusion which characterize internal colonialism. She and her people are taken into account only when their labour power is needed; culturally, they are discriminated against and rejected. Rigoberta Menchú's struggle is a struggle to modify and break the bonds that link her and her people to the *Ladinos*, and that inevitably implies changing the world. She is in no sense advocating a racial struggle, much less refusing to accept the irreversible fact of the existence of the *Ladinos*. She is fighting for the recognition of her culture, for acceptance of the fact that it is different and for her people's rightful share of power.

In Guatemala and certain other countries of Latin America, the Indians are in the majority. The situation there is, *mutatis mutandis*, comparable to that in South Africa, where a white minority has absolute power over the black majority. In other Latin American countries, where the Indians are in a minority, they do not even have the most elementary rights which every human being should enjoy. Indeed, the so-called forest Indians are being systematically exterminated in the name of progress. But unlike the Indian rebels of the past, who wanted to go back to precolumbian times, Rigoberta Menchu is not fighting in the name of an idealized or mythical past. On the contrary, she obviously wants to play an active part in history and it is that which makes her thought so modern. She and her comrades have given their historical ambitions an organic expression in the shape of the Peasant Unity Committee (CUC) and their decision to join the '31 January Popular Front', which was founded in January 1981 to commemorate the massacre of a group of Quiche Indians who occupied the Spanish embassy in Ciudad-Guatemala in order to draw attention to their plight. The group which occupied the embassy was led by Rigoberta's father, Vicente Menchú, who has since become a national hero for the Indians of Guatemala. The Popular Front, which consists of six mass organizations, took the

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Early in January 1982, Rigoberta Menchu was invited to Europe by a number of solidarity groups as a representative of the 31 January Popular Front. It was then that I met her in Paris. The idea of turning her life story into a book came from a Canadian woman friend who is very sympathetic to the cause of the Guatemalan Indians. Never having met Rigoberta, I was at first somewhat reluctant, as I realized that such projects depend to a large extent on the quality of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Such work has far-reaching psychological implications, and the revival of the past can resuscitate affects and zones of the memory which had apparently been forgotten for ever and can lead to anxiety and stress situations.

As soon as we met, however, I knew that we were going to get along toegether. The admiration her courage and dignity aroused in me did much to ease our relationship.

She came to my home one evening in January 1982. She was wearing traditional costume, including a multicoloured *huipil* with rich and varied embroidery; the patterns were not symmetrical and one could have been forgiven for assuming that they were random. She was also wearing an ankle-length skirt; this too was multicoloured and the thick material was obviously hand-woven. I later learned that it was called a *corte*. She had a broad, brightly-coloured sash around her waist. On her head, she wore a fuschia and red scarf knotted behind her neck. When she left Paris, she gave it to me, telling me that it had taken her three months to weave the cloth. Around her neck she had an enormous necklace of red beads and old silver coins with a heavy solid silver cross dangling from it. I remember it as being a particularly cold night; in fact I think it was snowing. Rigoberta was wearing no stockings and no coat. Beneath her *huipil*, her arms were bare. Her only protection against the cold was a short cape made from imitation traditional fabric; it barely came to her waist. The first thing that struck me about her was her open, almost childlike smile. Her face was round and moon-shaped. Her expression was as guileless as that of a child and a smile hovered permanently on her lips. She looked astonishingly young. I later discovered that her youthful air soon faded when she had to talk about the dramatic events that had overtaken her family. When she talked about that, you could see the suffering in her eyes, they lost

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I very soon became aware of her desire to talk and of her ability to express herself verbally.

Rigoberta spent a week in Paris. In order to make things easier and to make the best possible use of her time, she came to stay with me. Every day for a week, we began to record her story at nine in the morning, broke for lunch at about one, and then continued until six in the evening. We often worked after dinner too, either making more recordings or preparing questions for the next day. At the end of the week I had twenty-four hours of conversation on tape. For the whole of that week, I lived in Rigoberta's world. We practically cut ourselves off from the outside world. We established an excellent rapport immediately and, as the days passed and as she confided in me and told me the story of her life, her family and her community, our relationship gradually became more intense. As time went by, she became more self-assured and even began to seem contented. One day she told me that until then she had never been able to sleep all night without waking up in a panic because she had dreamed that the army was coming to arrest her.

But I think it was mainly the fact of living together under the same roof for a week that won me her trust; it certainly brought us closer together. I have to admit that this was partly an accident. A woman friend had brought me some maize flour and black beans back from Venezuela. Maize and beans are the staple diet in both Venezuela and Guatemala. I cannot describe how happy that made Rigoberta. It made me happy too, as the smell of *tortillas* and refried beans brought back my childhood in Venezuela, where the women get up early to cook *arepas*[1] for breakfast. *Arepas* are much thicker than Guatemalan *tortillas*, but the ingredients are the same, as are the methods of cooking and preparing them. The first thing Rigoberta did when she got up in the morning was make dough and cook

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tortillas for breakfast; it was a reflex that was thousands of years old. She did the same at noon and in the evening. It was a pleasure to watch her. Within seconds, perfectly round, paper-thin *tortillas* would materialize in her hands, as though by miracle. The women I had watched in my childhood made *arepas* by patting the dough flat between the palms of their hands, but Rigoberta made her *tortillas* by patting it between her fingers, holding them straight and together and constantly passing the dough from one hand to the other. It is much more difficult to make perfectly shaped *tortillas* like that. The pot of black beans lasted us for several days and made up the rest of our daily menu. By chance, I had pickled some hot peppers in oil shortly before Rigoberta's arrival. She sprinkled her beans with the oil, which almost set one's mouth on fire. 'We only trust people who eat what we eat', she told me one day as she tried to explain the relationship between the guerillas and the Indian communities. I suddenly realized that she had begun to trust me. A relationship based upon food proves that there are areas where Indians and non-Indians can meet and share things: the *tortillas* and black beans brought us together because they gave us the same pleasure and awakened the same drives in both of us. In terms of *Ladino*-Indian relations, it would be foolish to deny that the *Ladinos* have borrowed certain cultural traits from the Indians. As Linto points out, some features of the culture of the defeated always tend to be incorporated into the culture of the conqueror, usually via the economic-based slavery and concubinage that result from the exploitation of the defeated. The *ladinos* have adopted many features of the indigenous culture and those features have become what Georges Devereux calls the 'ethnic unconscious'. The *ladinos* of Latin America make a point of exaggerating such features in order to set themselves apart from their original European culture: it is the only way they can proclaim their ethnic individuality. They too feel the need to be different and therefore have to differentiate themselves from the Europe that gave them their world-vision, their language and their religion. They inevitably use the native cultures of Latin America to proclaim their otherness and have always tended to adopt the great monuments of the Aztec, Mayan and Incan pre-columbian civilizations as their own, without ever establishing any connection between the splendours of the past and the poor exploited Indians they despise and treat as slaves. Then there are the

'indigenists' who want to recover the lost world of their ancestors and cut themselves off completely from European culture. In order to do so, however, they use notions and techniques borrowed from that very culture. Thus, they promote the notion of an Indian nation. Indigenism is, then, itself a product of what Devereux calls 'dissociative acculturation': an attempt to revive the past by using techniques borrowed from the very culture one wishes to reject and free oneself from.[1] The indigenist meetings held in Paris – with Indian participation – are a perfect example of what he means. Just like the avant garde groups which still take up arms in various Latin American countries – and these groups should not be confused with resistance groups fighting military dictatorships, like the Guatemalan guerillas, the associations of the families of the 'disappeared ones', the countless trade union and other oppositional groups which are springing up in Chile and other countries, or the 'Plaza de Mayo Mothers' Movement in Argentina – the indigenist groups also want to publicize their struggles in Paris. Paris is their sound box. Whatever happens in Paris has repercussions through the world, even in Latin America. Just as the groups which are or were engaged in armed struggle in America have supporters who adopt their political line, the Indians too have their European supporters, many of whom are anthropologists. I do not want to start a polemic and I do not want to devalue any one form of action; I am simply stating the facts.

The mechanism of acculturation is basic to any culture; all cultures live in a state of permanent acculturation. But there is a world of difference between acculturation and an attempt to impose one culture in order to destroy another. I would say that Rigoberta Menchú is a successful product of acculturation in that her resistance to *Ladina* culture provides the basis for an antagonistic form of acculturation. By resisting *Ladina* culture, she is simply asserting her desire for ethnic individuality and cultural autonomy. Resistance can, for instance, take the form of rejecting the advantages that could result from adopting techniques from another culture. Rigoberta's refusal to use a mill to grind her maize is one example. Indian women have to get up very early to grind the pre-cooked maize with a stone if the *tortillas* are to be ready when they leave for work in the fields.

1. Georges Devereux, Essais d'ethropsychanalyse complémentariste, Paris 1972.

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'indigenists' who want to recover the lost world of their ancestors and cut themselves off completely from European culture. In order to do so, however, they use notions and techniques borrowed from that very culture. Thus, they promote the notion of an Indian nation. Indigenism is, then, itself a product of what Devereux calls 'dissociative acculturation': an attempt to revive the past by using techniques borrowed from the very culture one wishes to reject and free oneself from.[1] The indigenist meetings held in Paris – with Indian participation – are a perfect example of what he means. Just like the avant garde groups which still take up arms in various Latin American countries – and these groups should not be confused with resistance groups fighting military dictatorships, like the Guatemalan guerillas, the associations of the families of the 'disappeared ones', the countless trade union and other oppositional groups which are springing up in Chile and other countries, or the 'Plaza de Mayo Mothers' Movement in Argentina – the indigenist groups also want to publicize their struggles in Paris. Paris is their sound box. Whatever happens in Paris has repercussions through the world, even in Latin America. Just as the groups which are or were engaged in armed struggle in America have supporters who adopt their political line, the Indians too have their European supporters, many of whom are anthropologists. I do not want to start a polemic and I do not want to devalue any one form of action; I am simply stating the facts.

The mechanism of acculturation is basic to any culture; all cultures live in a state of permanent acculturation. But there is a world of difference between acculturation and an attempt to impose one culture in order to destroy another. I would say that Rigoberta Menchu is a successful product of acculturation in that her resistance to *Ladina* culture provides the basis for an antagonistic form of acculturation. By resisting *Ladina* culture, she is simply asserting her desire for ethnic individuality and cultural autonomy. Resistance can, for instance, take the form of rejecting the advantages that could result from adopting techniques from another culture. Rigoberta's refusal to use a mill to grind her maize is one example. Indian women have to get up very early to grind the pre-cooked maize with a stone if the *tortillas* are to be ready when they leave for work in the fields.

1. Georges Devereux, Essais d'ethnopsychanalyse complémentariste, Paris 1972.

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Some people might argue that this is nothing more than conservatism, and that indeed is what it is: it is a way of preserving the practices connected with preparing *tortillas* and therefore a way to prevent a whole social structure from collapsing. The practices surrounding the cultivation, harvesting and cooking of maize are the very basis of the social structure of the community. But when Rigoberta adopts political forms of action (the CUC, the 31 January Popular Front and the Vicente Menchú Organization of Christian Revolutionaries) she is adopting techniques from another culture in order to strengthen her own techniques and in order to resist and protect her own culture more effectively. Devereaux describes such practices as adopting new means in order to support existing means. Rigoberta borrows such things as the Bible, trade union organization and the Spanish language in order to use them against the original owner. For her the Bible is a sort of ersatz which she uses precisely because there is nothing like it in her culture. She says that, 'The Bible is written, and that gives us one more weapon.' Her people need to base their actions on a prophecy, on a law that comes down to them from the past. When I pointed out the contradiction between her defence of her own culture and her use of the Bible, which was after all one of the weapons of colonialism, she replied without any hesitation whatsoever: 'The Bible says that there is one God and we too have one God: the sun, the heart of the sky.' But the Bible also teaches us that violence can be justified, as in the story of Judith, who cut off the head of a king to save her people. That confirms the need for a prophecy to justify action. Similarly, Moses led his people out of Egypt and his example justifies the decision to transgress the law and leave the community. The example of David shows that children too can take part in the struggle. Men, women and children can all justify their actions by identifying with Biblical characters. The native peoples of Latin America have gone beyond the stage of introspection. It is true that their advances have sometimes been blocked, that their rebellions have been drowned in blood and that they have sometimes lost the will to go on. But they are now finding new weapons and new ways to adapt to their socio-economic situation.

Rigoberta has chosen words as her weapon and I have tried to give her words the permanency of print.

I must first warn the reader that, although I did train as an

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ethnographer, I have never studied Maya Quiche culture and have never done fieldwork in Guatemala. Initially, I thought that knowing nothing about Rigoberta's culture would be a handicap, but it soon proved to be a positive advantage. I was able to adopt the position of someone who is learning. Rigoberta soon realized this: that is why her descriptions of ceremonies and rituals are so detailed. Similarly, if we had been in her home in El Quiché, her descriptions of the landscape would not have been so realistic.

When we began to use the tape recorder, I initially gave her a schematic outline, a chronology: childhood, adolescence, family, involvement in the struggle . . . . As we continued, Rigoberta made more and more digressions, introduced descriptions of cultural practices into her story and generally upset my chronology. I therefore let her talk freely and tried to ask as few questions as possible. If anything remained unclear, I made a note of it and we would spend the last part of the working day going over anything I was uncertain about. Rigoberta took an obvious pleasure in explaining things, helping me understand and introducing me to her world. As she told me her life story, she travelled back in time, reliving dreadful moments like the day the army burned her twelve-year old brother alive in front of the family and the weeks of martyrdom her mother underwent at the hands of the army before they finally let her die. As I listened to her detailed account of the customs and rituals of her culture, I made a list which included customs relating to death. Rigoberta read my list. I had decided to leave the theme of death until last, but when we met for the last time, something stopped me from asking her about the rituals associated with death. I had the feeling that if I asked about them my questions would become a prophecy, so deeply marked by death was her life. The day after she left, a mutual friend brought me a cassette on which Rigoberta had recorded a description of funeral ceremonies, 'because we forgot to record this.' That gesture was the final proof that Rigoberta is a truly exceptional woman; culturally, it also proved that she is a woman of complete integrity and was letting me know that she had not been taken in. In her culture, death is an integral part of life and is accepted as such.

In order to transform the spoken word into a book, I worked as follows.

I began by transcribing all the tapes. By that I mean that nothing

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was left out, not a word, even if it was used incorrectly or was later changed. I altered neither the style nor the sentence structure. The Spanish original covers almost five hundred pages of typescript.

I then read through the transcript carefully. During a second reading, I established a thematic card index, first identifying the major themes (father, mother, childhood, education) and then those which occurred most frequently (work, relations with *ladinos*, linguistic problems). This was to provide the basis of the division of the material into chapters. I soon reached the decision to give the manuscript the form of a monologue: that was how it came back to me as I re-read it. I therefore decided to delete all my questions. By doing so I became what I really was: Rigoberta's listener. I allowed her to speak and then became her instrument, her double by allowing her to make the transition from the spoken to the written word. I have to admit that this decision made my task more difficult, as I had to insert linking passages if the manuscript was to read like a monologue, like one continuous narrative. I then divided it into chapters organized around the themes I had already identified. I followed my original chronological outline, even though our conversations had not done so, so as to make the text more accessible to the reader. The chapters describing ceremonies relating to birth, marriage and harvests did cause some problems, as I somehow had to integrate them into the narrative. I inserted them at a number of different points, but eventually went back to my original transcript and followed the order of Rigoberta's spontaneous associations. It was pointed out to me that placing the chapter dealing with birth ceremonies at the beginning of the book might bore the reader. I was also advised simply to cut it or include it in an appendix. I ignored all these suggestions. Perhaps I was wrong, in that the reader might find it somewhat off-putting. But I could not leave it out, simply out of respect for Rigoberta. She talked to me not only because she wanted to tell us about her sufferings but also – or perhaps mainly – because she wanted us to hear about a culture of which she is extremely proud and which she wants to have recognized. Once the manuscript was in its final form, I was able to cut a number of points that are repeated in more than one chapter. Some of the repetitions have been left as they stand as they lead in to other themes. That is simply Rigoberta's way of talking. I also decided to correct the gender mistakes which inevitably occur when someone had just learned to speak a foreign lan-

guage. It would have been artificial to leave them uncorrected and it would have made Rigoberta look 'picturesque', which is the last thing I wanted.

It remains for me to thank Rigoberta for having granted me the privilege of meeting her and sharing her life with me. She allowed me to discover another self. Thanks to her, my American self is no longer something 'uncanny'. To conclude, I would like to dedicate these lines from Miguel Angel Asturias's *Barefoot Meditations* to Rigoberta Menchú:

Rise and demand; you are a burning flame.
You are sure to conquer there where the final horizon
Becomes a drop of blood, a drop of life,
Where you will carry the universe on your shoulders,
Where the universe will bear your hope.

Montreux-Paris, December 1982.

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We Indians have always hidden our identity and kept our secrets to ourselves. This is why we are discriminated against. We often find it hard to talk about ourselves because we know we must hide so much in order to preserve our Indian culture and prevent it being taken away from us. So I can only tell you very general things about the *nahual*. I can't tell you what my *nahual* is because that is one of our secrets.

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IV

FIRST VISIT TO THE FINCA. LIFE IN THE FINCA

'This is why there is no hope of winning the hearts of our people'
—Rigoberta Menchú

After forty days, when the child is fully integrated into the community, the routine of going down to the *fincas* begins.

From when I was very tiny, my mother used to take me down to the *finca*, wrapped in a shawl on her back. She told me that when I was about two, I had to be carried screaming onto the lorry because I didn't want to go. I was so frightened I didn't stop crying until we were about half-way there. I remember the journey by lorry very well. I didn't even know what it was, but I knew I hated it because I hate things that smell horrible. The lorry holds about forty people. But in with the people, go the animals (dogs, cats, chickens) which the people from the *Altiplano* take with them while they are in the *finca*. We have to take our animals. It sometimes took two nights and a day from my village to the coast. During the trip the animals and the small children used to dirty the lorry and you'd get people vomiting and wetting themselves. By the end of the journey, the smell – the filth of people and animals – was unbearable.

The lorry is covered with a tarpaulin so you can't see the countryside you're passing through. Most of the journey is spent sleeping because it's so tedious. The stuffiness inside the lorry with the cover on, and the smell of urine and vomit, make you want to be sick yourself just from being in there. By the time we got to the *finca*, we

were totally stupefied; we were like chickens coming out of a pot. We were in such a state, we could hardly walk to the *finca*. I made many trips from the *Altiplano* to the coast, but I never saw the countryside we passed through. We heard other lorries and cars, but we didn't ever see them. We never saw any other villages on the way. I saw the wonderful scenery and places for the first time when we were thrown out of the *finca* and had to pay our own way back on the bus.

I remember that from when I was about eight to when I was about ten, we worked in the coffee crop. And after that I worked on the cotton plantations further down the coast where it was very, very hot. After my first day picking cotton, I woke up at midnight and lit a candle. I saw the faces of my brothers and sisters covered with mosquitos. I touched my own face, and I was covered too. They were everywhere; in people's mouths and everywhere. Just looking at these insects and thinking about being bitten set me scratching. That was our world. I felt that it would always be the same, always the same. It hadn't ever changed.

None of the drivers liked taking us because, naturally, we were filthy and burned from the sun. No-one wanted to drive us. The lorries belonged to the *fincas*, but they were driven by the recruiting agents, the *caporales*. These *caporales* are in charge of about forty people, or more or less what the lorry holds. When they get to the finca, the *caporal* becomes the overseer of this group. They are usually men from our villages too, but they've been in the army or have left the community. They start behaving like the landowners, and treat their own people badly. They shout at them and insult them. The *finca* offers them opportunities to get on, if they do what the landowners want. They get better wages and they have a steady job. It's their job to order us around and keep us in line, I'd say. They've learned Spanish so they can act as go-betweens for the landowner and his workers, because our people don't speak Spanish. They often take advantage of us because of this, but we can't complain because we never see the landowner and don't know where he lives. We see only the contracting agents and the overseers. The contracting agents fetch and carry the people from the *Altiplano*. The overseers stay on the *fincas*. One group of workers arrives, another leaves and the overseer carries on giving orders. They are in charge. When you're working, for example, and you take a little rest, he comes and insults you. 'Keep working, that's what you're paid

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for,' he says. They also punish the slow workers. Sometimes we're paid by the day, and sometimes for the amount of work done. It's when we work by the day that we get the worst treatment. The *caporal* stands over you every minute to see how hard you're working. At other times, you're paid for what you pick. If you don't manage to finish the amount set in a day, you have to continue the next day, but at least you can rest a bit without the overseer coming down on you. But the work is still hard whether you work by the day or by the amount.

Before we get into the lorry in our village, the labour contractor tells us to bring with us everything we'll need for the month on the *finca*; that is, plates and cups, for example. Every worker carries his plate, his cup, and his water bottle in a bag on his back so he can go and get his *tortilla* at mealtimes. Children who don't work don't earn, and so are not fed. They don't need plates. They share with their parents. The little ones who *do* earn also have plates for their ration of *tortilla*. When I wasn't earning anything, my mother used to give me half her ration. All the mothers did the same. We get *tortilla* and beans free, but they are often rotten. If the food varies a bit and we get an egg about every two months, then it is deducted from our pay. Any change in the food is deducted.

The same goes for anything we get from the *cantina*. As well as alcohol, the *cantina* in the *finca* also sells things that children like: sweets, cakes and soft drinks. It's all in the shop. The children, who are hot and tired and hungry, are always asking their parents for treats and it makes parents sad to see their children asking for things they can't give. But everything they buy is marked up on an account, and at the end when you get your pay, you always owe so much for food, so much at the shop, so much at the pharmacy. You end up owing a lot. For example, if a child unintentionally breaks a branch of a coffee bush, you have to work to make it up. They deduct for everything and you end up having to pay debts before you can leave.

Every *finca* in Guatemala has a *cantina*, owned by the landowner, where the workers get drunk on alcohol and all kinds of *guaro*, and pile up debts. They often spend most of their wages. They drink to get happy and to forget the bitterness they feel at having to leave their villages in the *Altiplano* and come and work so brutally hard on the *fincas* for so little. I remember my father and mother going to the *cantina* out of despair. It was sometimes terrible for us. My

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mother and my brothers and sisters often had to bear all our household costs when the month on the *finca* was over because my father owed all his wages to the *cantina*. He was a very sensitive man. When anything went wrong or when times were very hard for us, he used to drink to forget. But he hurt himself twice over because his money went back to the landowner. That's why the landowner set up the *cantina* anyway. Once I remember my father working the whole day picking cotton but somehow didn't pick the required amount. He was so angry that he just wanted to forget everything and spent the whole night in the *cantina*. When the month was up, he owed nearly all his wage to the *cantina*. We honestly don't know if he really drank all that rum or not, but it was awful to see such a huge debt chalked up against him after a whole month's work. You get into debt for every little thing. This taught us to be very careful. My mother used to say: 'Don't touch anything or we'll have to pay for it.' My mother used to see that we all behaved ourselves and didn't get her into debt.

This is what happened that time we were thrown out of the *finca*. (We were told by one of our neighbours who stayed on there). When they came to get paid at the end of the month, the overseer included my mother and my brother and me, and a neighbour who was thrown out with us, in the list of workers to be paid, just as if we were finishing the month and collecting our wages. Of course, he collected the pay due to us himself. That's what they do. With what they earn and what they steal from our people, the overseers buy lovely houses in the *Altiplano* and have houses in other places too. They can live wherever they want to, in the places they like best.

Many of them are *ladinos* from Oriente*. But there are also many of our people from the *Altiplano* among them. My father used to call them 'ladinized Indians'. When we say 'ladinized' we mean they act like *ladinos*, bad *ladinos*, because afterwards we realized that not all *ladinos* are bad. A bad *ladino* is one who knows how to talk and steal from the people. He is a small-scale picture of the landowner.

I remember going along in the lorry and wanting to set it on fire so that we would be allowed to rest. What bothered me most, was travelling on and on and on, wanting to urinate, and not being able to because the lorry wouldn't stop. The drivers were sometimes drunk, boozed. They stopped a lot on the way but they didn't let us get out. This enraged us; we hated the drivers because they wouldn't let us get out although they used to drink on the way. It made me very

angry and I used to ask my mother; 'Why do we go to the *finca*?'. And my mother used to say; 'Because we have to. When you're older you'll understand why we need to come'. I did understand, but the thing was I was fed up with it all. When I was older, I didn't find it strange any more. Slowly I began to see what we had to do and why things were like that. I realised we weren't alone in our sorrow and suffering but a lot of people, in many different regions, shared it with us.

When we worked down on the cotton plantation (I think I was about twelve) I was already big and did the work of a grown woman. I remember the first time I saw a *finca* landowner, I was frightened of him because he was very fat. I'd never seen a *ladino* like that. He was very fat, well dressed and even had a watch. We didn't know about watches then. I didn't have any shoes although many of our people wore *caitos*; but nothing which compared to the shoes this landowner had. At dawn the overseer told us; 'Listen, you're going to work one more day at the end of the month'. Whenever anything like this happened, they'd just announce they were adding another day on to the month. If the month had thirty one days, we had to work the first day of the next month, or if there were rest days for any reason, we'd have to make up the day. So the overseer told us, 'The owner is coming today to thank you for your work and wants to spend some time talking to you, so nobody leave because we have to wait for him.' So we stayed in our camp, in the workers' barracks where we lived and they divided us into groups. Then, when the great landowner arrived, we saw he was accompanied by about fifteen soldiers. This seemed really stupid to me, because I thought they were pointing their rifles at the landowner, so I asked my mother: 'Why are they forcing the landowner to come and see us?' But it was really to protect him. There were about fifteen soldiers and they found a suitable place for the owner to sit. The overseer said, 'Some of you have to dance for the owner.' My mother said no, and hid us. They wanted the children to prepare a sort of welcome for the owner. But none of us dared even go near him because he had so many bodyguards with guns. When the owner began to speak, he spoke in Spanish. My mother understood a little Spanish and afterwards she told us he was talking about the elections. But we didn't even understand what our parents told us – that the *ladinos* had a government. That is, the President who had been in power all this

time, was, for my parents, for all of us, President of the *ladinos*' government. It wasn't the government of *our* country. That's what we always thought. So my mother said that he was talking about the government of the *ladinos*. What was it he was saying? The landowner was speaking, and the overseer started translating what he was saying. They told us he said we all had to go and make a mark on a piece of paper. That would be a vote, I imagine that it was a vote. We all went to make our mark on the paper. They gave my father one and my mother and showed them the place to put their mark. I remember that the paper had some squares with three or four drawings on it. So my parents and my older brothers and sisters marked the paper in the place the owner told them. He warned us that anyone who didn't mark the paper would be thrown out of work at the end of the month. Anyone who was thrown out would not be paid. The workers were forced to mark the paper. So that was another day of rest, and it meant we would have to work the second day of the next month as well. The landowner left, but afterwards' . . . I dreamed about him over and over again . . . it must have been the fear, the impression made on me by that man's face. I remember telling mother: 'I dreamed about that old *ladino* who came here.' And mother said: 'Don't be silly, he's only a man, don't be afraid.' That's what she said. But all the children there ran away from their parents and cried when they saw that *ladino*, and even more at the soldiers and their weapons. They thought they were going to kill their parents. I thought so, too. I thought they were going to kill everybody, because they were carrying guns.

We didn't even know what the name on the paper was. My father sometimes used to tell us names because of the things he remembered. In the defeat of 1954, he said they captured men from our region, and from other regions. They took our men off to the barracks. My father was one of those caught. He has very black memories of those days. He says many, many of our people died and we only escaped because of our own quick wits. That's how we survived, my father said. His memories of this period are very bad. He always talked about the President there was then, but we didn't know any of the others. We didn't know the rest, not their names or what they were like. We knew nothing about them. Then the landowner came to congratulate us. We saw him a second time. He came with his wife and one of his sons. They were nearly as fat as he was.

They came to the *finca* and told us that our President had won, t
one we had voted for. We didn't even know that they were vo
they'd taken away. My parents laughed when they heard them s.
'Our President', because for us he was the President of the *ladin*
not ours at all. This was my impression as a small girl and I though
lot about what the President would be like. I thought he was an ev
bigger man than the landowner. The landowner was very big a
tall, and we didn't have big men like that in our village. So I thoug
that the President was even taller than the landowner. When I w
older, I met the landowner again and he asked my parents for n
That was when I was sent to the capital. That's another stage in n
life.

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VII

DEATH OF HER LITTLE BROTHER IN THE FINCA. DIFFICULTY OF COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER INDIANS

> '. . . those who sow maize for profit leave the earth empty of bones, because it is the bones of the forefathers that give the maize, and then the earth demands bones, and the softest ones, those of children, pile up on top of her and beneath her black crust, to feed her.'
>
> —'Men of Maize' Miguel Angel Asturias

We'd been in the *finca* for fifteen days, when one of my brothers died from malnutrition. My mother had to miss some days' work to bury him. Two of my brothers died in the *finca*. The first, he was the eldest, was called Felipe. I never knew him. He died when my mother started working. They'd sprayed the coffee with pesticide by plane while we were working, as they usually did, and my brother couldn't stand the fumes and died of intoxication. The second one, I did see die. His name was Nicolás. He died when I was eight. He was the youngest of all of us, the one my mother used to carry about. He was two then. When my little brother started crying, crying, crying, my mother didn't know what to do with him because his belly was swollen by malnutrition too. His belly was enormous and my mother didn't know what to do about it. The time came when my mother couldn't spend any more time with him or they'd take her job away from her. My brother had been ill from the day we arrived in the *finca*, very ill. My mother kept on working and so did we. He lasted fifteen days and then went into his death throes, and we didn't know what to do. Our neighbours from our village had gone to different *fincas*, there were only two with us. We weren't all together. We didn't know what to do because in our group we were with people from other communities who spoke different languages. We couldn't

talk to them. We couldn't speak Spanish either. We couldn't unde stand each other and we needed help. Who was there to turn t There was no-one we could count on, least of all the overseer, h might even throw us out of the *finca*. We couldn't count on th owner, we didn't even know who he was since he always did ever thing through intermediaries: the overseers, the contracting agen etc. So that's how it was. When my mother needed help to bury m brother, we couldn't talk to anyone, we couldn't communicate, an she was desolate at the sight of my brother's body. I remember onl being able to communicate with the others through signs. Most them have had the same experiences; every day they're stuck situations in which they can't call on help from outside and have t help each other. But it was very difficult. I remember also wanting t make friends with the children who lived in our shed with us – w were three hundred . . . four hundred people working in the *finca* but we couldn't get to know each other.

A *galera* is a house, a large shack, where all the workers live. It called a *galera* because it has only palm leaves or banana leaves for roof, and the sides are open, it has no walls. All the workers live the together, with their dogs and cats, everything they bring with the from the *Altiplano*. There are no divisions, they put us in any ol how, and with anybody. That's what life is like on the coast. Just on house to hold four, five hundred people.

It was difficult to get to know each other anyway, but our wor made it even more difficult because we had to get up at three in th morning and start work straight away. It's worst when we're pickin cotton because it isn't the weight that counts, it's the quantity. In th early morning it's nice and cool but by midday it's like being in a oven; it's very, very hot. That's why they make us start work so early We stop work at midday to eat but go on working straightawa afterwards until night-time. So, we didn't have much time to get t know any of the others, in spite of our all being one people. That' what is really distressing for us Indians, because when we'r together, well, we're a community, we're all from the same place, bu down in the *finca* we're together with other Indians we don't know All the workers on the coastal estates, in coffee or in other things, ar Indians who either live there at the *fincas* or emigrate there to work They're all Indians but from different ethnic groups who speal different languages. This makes it very difficult for us because th

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linguistic barriers prevent any dialogue between us Indians, between ourselves. We can only understand the people from our own ethnic group, because we can't speak Spanish and we can't speak the other languages. So although we want to get closer to other groups, we can't. And so what we used to do in the *finca* was to go on celebrating our customs and everything, but without understanding each other. It was as if we'd been talking to foreigners.

The little boy died early in the morning. We didn't know what to do. Our two neighbours were anxious to help my mother but they didn't know what to do either – not how to bury him or anything. Then the *caporal* told my mother she could bury my brother in the *finca* but she had to pay a tax to keep him buried there. My mother said: 'I have no money at all.' He told her: 'Yes, and you already owe a lot of money for medicine and other things, so take his body and leave.' We didn't know what to do. It was impossible to take his body back to the *Altiplano*. It was already starting to smell because of the humidity, the heat, on the coast. None of the people living in our *galera* wanted my brother's body to stay there, of course, because it was upsetting. So my mother decided that, even if she had to work for a month without earning, she would pay the tax to the landowner, or the overseer, to bury my brother in the *finca*. Out of real kindness and a desire to help one of the men brought a little box, a bit like a suitcase. We put my brother in it and took him to be buried. We lost practically a whole day's work over mourning my brother. We were all so very sad for him. That night the overseer told us: 'Leave here tomorrow.' 'Why?' asked my mother. 'Because you missed a day's work. You're to leave at once and you won't get any pay. So tomorrow I don't want to see you round here.' It was terrible for my mother, she didn't know what to do. She didn't know how to find my father because he was working somewhere else. When they throw people out of the *finca*, they don't take them back home as they usually do. Usually when the time comes to go back to the *Altiplano*, the same contracting agents take us back to our village, so we don't have to worry about how we're getting back, or about any transport, or even where we are. We didn't know our whereabouts, we didn't know where we were or anything. My mother didn't even know the name of the town we were in. But we knew we had to leave so my mother began getting our things together. So our neighbours said: 'We'll go with you even though it means losing everything we

worked for too.' One of them lent my mother some money to pay for the burial since she'd been in the *finca* for about four months and had saved a little money. The fifteen days we had worked we weren't paid. Not only my mother and I; but my brother had worked fifteen days and wasn't paid either. The overseer said: 'No, it's because you owe a lot to the pharmacy. So, go on, out of here. I don't want to see you around here again.' But my mother knew that she hadn't been able to buy medicine for her son and that's why he'd died. The trouble is that we couldn't speak Spanish and the overseer spoke our language because he came from our region. He threw us out and said he didn't want to see us round there again. The boss's orders. So we had to leave.

We arrived back at our house in the *Altiplano*. My mother was very sad, so was my brother who was with us. My father didn't know his son had died, nor did my other brothers and sisters because they were working on other *fincas*. Fifteen days later, they all arrived home to be greeted by the news that the little boy had died and that we owed a lot of money. My father and my brothers and sisters had been earning in the other *fincas* and had enough money to settle up with our neighbour. The neighbour also gave what he felt he should to the dead child. That's how they helped us – the community, everyone – once we'd got home.

From that moment, I was both angry with life and afraid of it, because I told myself: 'This is the life I will lead too; having many children, and having them die.' It's not easy for a mother to watch her child die, and have nothing to cure him with or help him live. Those fifteen days working in the *finca* was one of my earliest experiences and I remember it with enormous hatred. That hatred has stayed with me until today.

We went down to the *finca* again. Christmas is the last month we spend in the *finca*. In January we start working our land in the *Altiplano*. January and February are the months we sow our crops. In March we go back down to the coast to earn money to spend on the maize fields, and when the first work on the maize is over, we return to the *finca* to carry on earning for food.

When I was ten, they raised my pay because by then I was picking forty pounds of coffee. For picking cotton I still got very little because it was a lot in quantity but not in weight. There's an office in every *finca* where all the work you deliver is taken. It's weighed and

noted down for their accounts. Towards the end, my brothers (who are not stupid) managed to figure out the ways in which they fiddled the amounts weighed. They have tricks to make it weigh less, when the real amount is much more. That happens everywhere. It's a special trick of the men in charge of weighing the workers loads; that's when they steal many pounds of coffee. They put large amounts on one side so that they can deliver more and get paid more. It's part of a long process which starts the moment the agents contract the workers in their villages and load them into the lorries like animals. It's one long process of robbing them of their pay. They're charged for absolutely everything, even for the loading of the lorry. Then, in the *finca*, the overseers steal from the workers from the very first day. The *cantina* steals from them too. It continues until the last day. It's so bad that we have had the bad experience of getting home again without a *centavo*. Coffee is measured by the workload set but cotton is measured by a different method. If you pick 65 pounds of cotton per day, you're paid according to the weight. But with coffee, you have to pick a *quintal* per day and if you don't it's added on and the next day you have to finish that *quintal* before starting another one. In my case, when I started work I had to do a third of what an adult's task would be. That was 35 pounds. But some days I could only do 28 pounds so the next day I had to carry on with the same one. This way you fall further and further behind until you have to spend two days just making up the amount you're missing. With cotton, the situation is different but it's very difficult too. The worst work is when it's second 'hand'. First 'hand' is when the flowers are nicely grouped together, but second hand is when you have to pick between the branches the cotton which has been left behind the first time. That's much harder work but the pay is the same.

VIII

LIFE IN THE ALTIPLANO. RIGOBERTA'S TENTH BIRTHDAY

'We Indians never do anything which goes against the laws of our ancestors'

—Rigoberta Menchú

Back in the *Altiplano*, we all set to work with our hoes. I remember from the age of nine going off to the fields with my hoe to help my father. I was like a boy, chopping wood with an axe, or with a machete. There was very little water near our village. We had to walk about four kilometres to fetch our water, and that added to our work a lot. But we were happy because that was the time of year we sowed our bit of maize and it was sometimes enough for us to live on. At times, we managed to scrape a living in the *Altiplano* and didn't go down to the *fincas*. When the fields were full of plants and we had a bit of maize and a few *tortillas*, we were very happy up there. The land was fertile and I remember my mother giving us different types of beans like *ayote*, *chilacayote*, and others that grew up there. But we didn't eat a lot of beans because most of what my mother grew was taken to market to buy soap, or some chile. That's what we ate – chile. And if we wanted to, we could pick plants in the fields. So, with chile, plants, and *tortillas*, we ate very well. That was our menu most of the time.

It's not the custom among our people to use a mill to grind the maize to make dough. We use a grinding stone; that is, an ancient stone passed down from our ancestors. We don't use ovens either. We only use wood fires to cook our *tortillas*. First we get up at three

☐ **GUATEMALA:** Human rights report ...

Bishop's death shows 'never again' is still elusive hope

By **MARIE DES JARLAIS**
La Crosse

As Bishop Gerardi pulled into his garage in Guatemala City on a Sunday evening, a man was waiting. He bludgeoned the bishop's face beyond recognition with a jagged piece of concrete block. Nothing was taken — this murder was used to send a message.

Just two nights before his death, hundreds of people gathered in the cathedral in Guatemala City as the Human Rights Office of the Catholic Church, headed by Bishop Gerardi, presented its final report on the many decades of violence. After several presentations by bishops and others, 10 people, nine of them indigenous, simply approached one by one to receive a portion of the four-volume report titled "Guatemala, Never Again," in the name of the thousands of people killed and their families.

Under church sponsorship, 600 people, mainly indigenous, carried out 6,500 individual and joint interviews to gather first-person testimony of what happened. They interviewed people in Kekchi, Ixil, Quiche and a number of other native languages. Most interviewees were family members of those who had been killed or "disappeared," but some were those who admitted to having perpetuated violence. The testimony was recorded, summarized, portions transcribed and translated, and augmented with special studies. The final report is this four-volume publication describing the impact of the violence, the methods of terror, a historical account of how it came about, and — very importantly — the names of those who were murdered, tortured, raped and "disappeared." One of the most important results of this process will be a simple memorial in the form of columns in the cathedral plaza bearing the names of those killed.

Coming to terms with this past history is especially difficult for Guatemala. Guatemala has never had political prisoners because after being tortured, people have simply been killed or often "disappeared" with no burial site.

The report documents the killing of 25,123 people, only a portion of the 150,000 victims of political violence for the past 40 years. The army was directly responsible for 60 percent and indirectly responsible for 20 percent (carried out with the help of army-recruited and trained obligatory civil patrols). Leftist guerrillas were responsible for fewer than 10 percent of the killings. A staggering 92 percent of those killed were civilians (that is, not involved with guerrillas); half belonged to church-sponsored organizations. The report documents 422 mass killings or massacres, primarily in the 1980s, and almost all in indigenous villages.

Considering the magnitude of the violence, virtually no one has been brought to justice. This is because the Guatemalan military has not really lost its power. Unlike El Salvador, where the guerrillas held the armed forces to a standstill through the 1980s, Guatemala's military assisted a slow return to a civilian presidency while keeping their power and remaining practically untouchable. Violence in Guatemala has become a business, as some active and retired military officers engage in kidnapping for ransom, car theft, drug running and protection not unlike the Mafia.

Unfortunately, political killings have not ceased since the signing of the "peace." There are cases of massacres of indigenous returning to their homeland from their exile in Mexico.

Now they have killed Bishop Gerardi. I have visited the Department of Quiche, the area where he served during the terror years of the 1980s. As bishop, he made the decision to withdraw all the priests because of the number who were being killed. He also received death threats at that time. He knew firsthand what reality was for the people of the Quiche. Gerardi spent more than two years in exile as a result of his stance for the people.

Who ordered the killing of Bishop Gerardi? We may never know, but it is safe to surmise that it is someone who securely knows that despite commissions formed and information sought, whoever gets close enough to the truth may suffer the same fate.

Nor is the United States blameless. It was a 1954 CIA-organized coup that overthrew the democratically elected President Arbenz and put the army in power. It was the U.S.-encouraged Vietnam-style tactics that led to thousands of deaths in the 1960s. In 1982, President Reagan visited General Efrain Rios Montt (who was president through a military coup) and said Rios Montt was receiving a "bum rap" at the very height of massacres from the army he commanded. The REMHI report documents these massacres. Our State Department eventually kept a lower profile in its approach to Guatemala, but the Pentagon maintained its ties with training and discreet aid. How many of the soldiers and their commanders studied at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Ga.?

In recent years, our presidents have openly welcomed Guatemala into the circle of "democratic" countries in our hemisphere, while ignoring the public fact that political murders can be committed with impunity. If all countries with records of human rights violations were judged equally, Guatemala would never be accepted as a country of democracy.

I am returning to Guatemala in August and look forward to meeting with the heroic people who form the Archdiocesan Human Rights Commission and other human rights groups. They are a testimony that, despite the cost, people will stand up and speak the truth. It is important that our U.S. government declassify all documents from the 1954 coup to the present so that we as a country do not stand as an obstacle to the truth being known.

☐

Marie Des Jarlais is a sister with the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration based in La Crosse.

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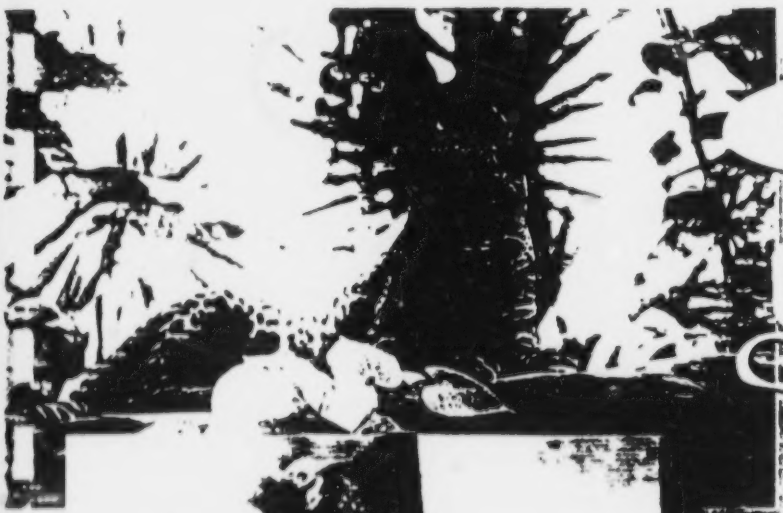
GUATEMALA



¿Cuándo fue La Ultima Vez que hizo Algo por Primera Vez?

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MAGIA, COLOR Y AVENTURA

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De Compras

Guatemala es un buen lugar para comprar textiles, madera tallada plata, joyeria de jade y muchas otras artesanias. Los productos de mayor demanda son las coloridas telas tejidas a mano. Muchos poblados como Chinautla, San Luis Jilotepeque y Rabinal, producen bellos y baratos objetos cerámicos. El Mercado Central en la ciudad de Guatemala y el Mercado de Artesanias, cerca del aeropuerto, ofrecen una amplia seleccion de artesanias. Algunas boutiques ofrecen ropa con diseños contemporáneos, adornada con motivos indigenas tradicionales. Mercaderia producida localmente de alta calidad y marcas de renombre internacional pueden conseguirse en muchos tiendas incluyendo las del Centro Comercial Los Próceres, Galerias La Pradera, Plaza Cemaco y Géminis 10, localizados en la Zona 10 de la ciudad, y en Peri-Roosevelt.

Comunicaciones y Servicio Postal

TELGUA, la empresa de telecomunicaciones guatemalteca ofrece servicio de telégrafo, telex, fax y llamadas internacionales, con un horario de 08:00 a 19:00 horas.

Las oficinas postales o de correo en todo el pais están abiertas de 09:00 a 17:30 horas.

Transporte

Los buses urbanos y rurales le llevarán a cualquier lugar que desee ir. Para necesidades especiales, existe alquiler de automóviles, buses, taxis, aviones y barcos.

cakchiquel, mam y kekchi, son hablados por varias comunidades indigenas. En casi todas las areas turisticas, la mayoria de hoteles y algunos restaurantes se habla ingles.

Economia

pais produce y exporta azúcar, bananos, frutas, vegetales, flores y cardamomo.

Adicionalmente, Guatemala ha desarrollado fuertes industrias dedicadas a la maquila de ropa y productos electrónicos, asi como a la manufactura de muebles y de productos enlatados y su industria petrolera está creciendo rápidamente.

Gente

Guatemala cuenta aproximadamente con 10 millones de habitantes. Un alto porcentaje pertenece a los 21 grupos mayas que aun conservan el patrimonio cultural legado por sus ancestros, mientras que los habitantes de la costa Caribe recuerdan sus raices afrocaribeñas.

Religion

La Constitucion guatemalteca garantiza libertad de culto. La religión prevaleciente es la catolica romana, pero existe una cierta tendencia hacia el cristianismo evangelico. Algunas comunidades indigenas aún practican una combinacion de catolicismo con ritos precolombinos.

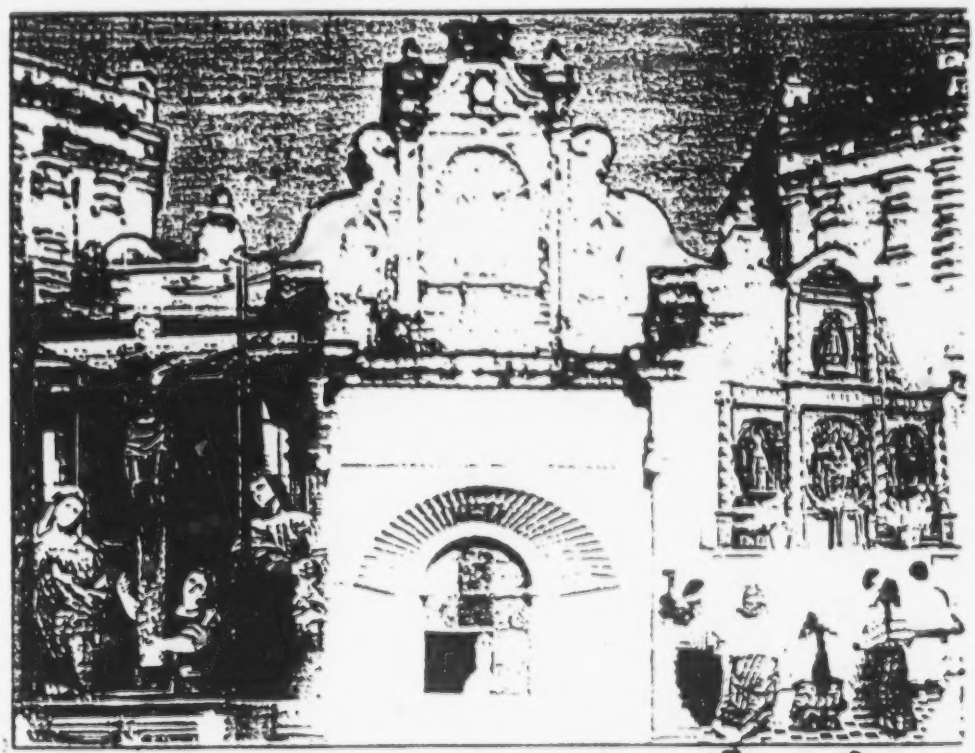
Gobierno

La Republica de Guatemala es una democracia cuyo gobierno se encuentra dividido en tres organismos, el Legislativo, el Ejecutivo y el Judicial. Esta dividida en 22 subdivisiones administrativas llamadas departamentos, los cuales, a su vez, están subdivididos en municipios.

Economia

El café es el principal producto de la economia, pero el turismo, en los ultimos años, se ha convertido en el recurso con el segundo lugar de importancia para captar divisas extranieras.

De cualquier manera, la agricultura es un componente importante de la economia. El



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Una Mágica Tradición

enga un encuentro cara a cara con una u ura antigua que aun conserva sus c umbres y tradiciones ancestrales. Más e 20 grupos etnicos indigenas de iuatemaia le permitiran descubrir y i avillarse con tradiciones y valores e idos en nuestra cultura moderna.

Mercados coloridos, la pompa y el esplendor e as procesiones de Semana Santa, las i nificas alfombras de aserrin y flores que orman parte de ella, las muchas eneraciones pasadas de generación en e eracion y la magia, el carisma y la c ialidad de la gente guatemalteca, eguramente tocaran su corazon.

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Artesanías de Ensueño

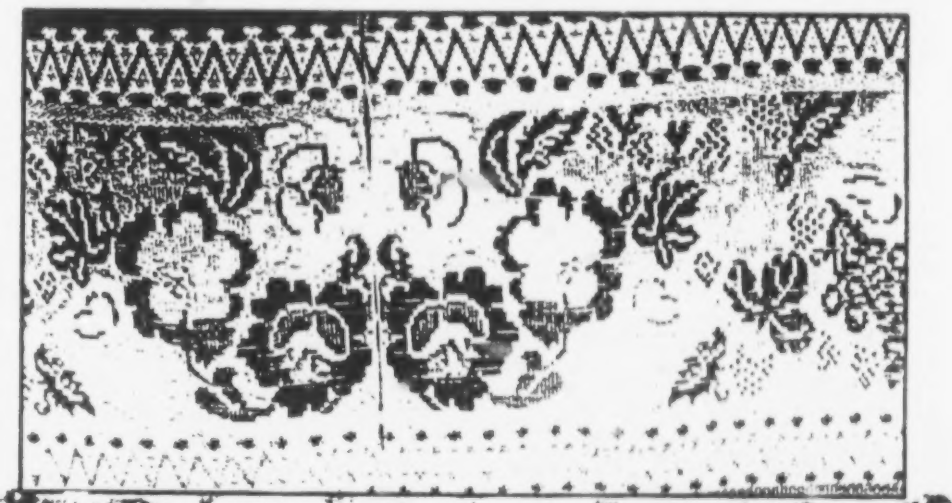
◇◇◇

a explosión de color y la amplia selección de artesanías oducidas en Guatemala es asombrosa!

s mercados rebosan con genuinas obras de arte con diseños técnicas transmitidas de generación en generación.

Madera, jade, textiles, barro y metales preciosos son moldeados por las manos de los mayas contemporáneos, quienes continúan con las tradiciones de sus creativos ancestros.

Venga y aprenda el arte del "regateo" en nuestros mercados y adquiera bellos objetos artesanales a precios increíbles.



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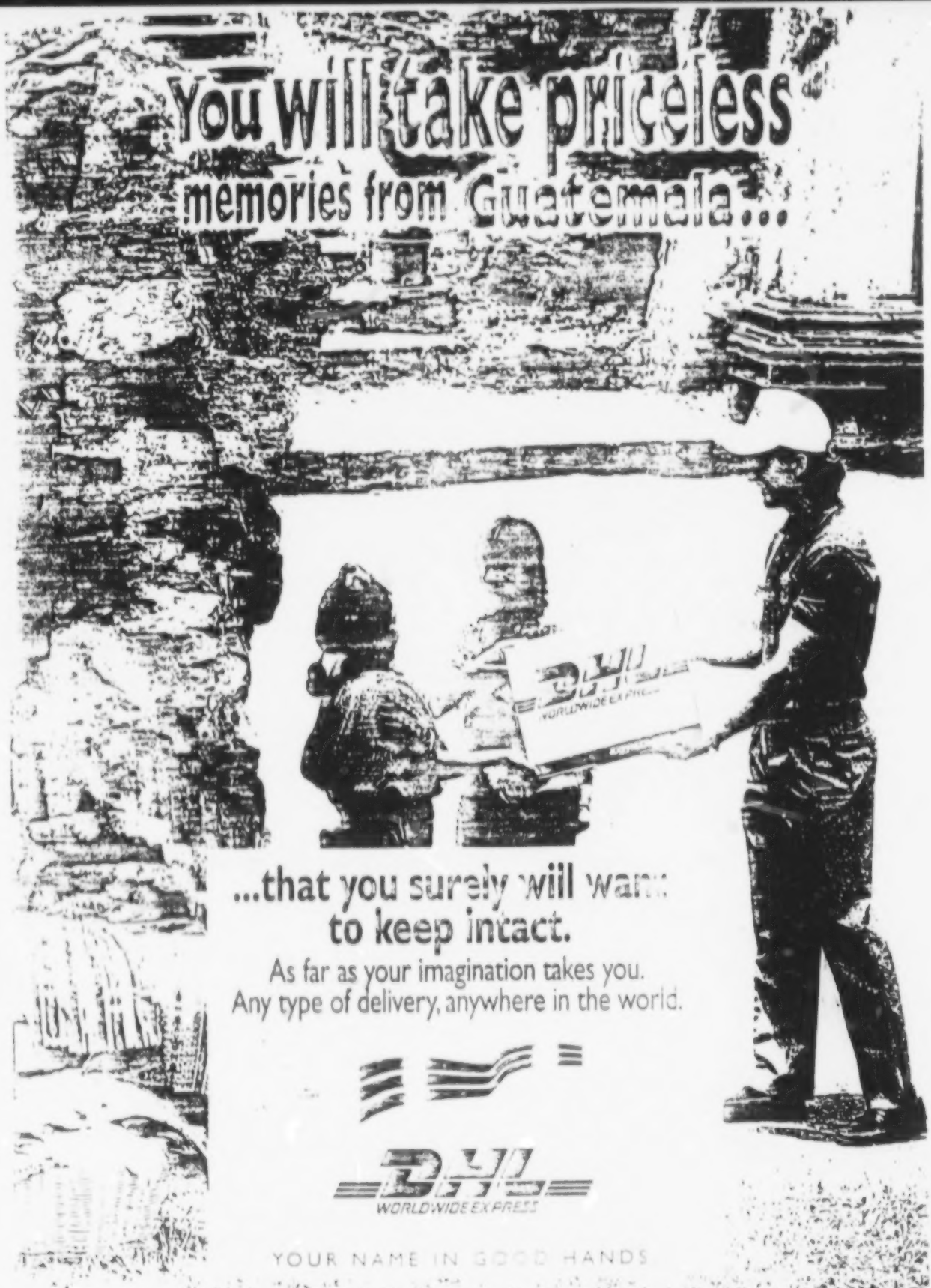
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Welcome

San Antonio Aguas Calientes

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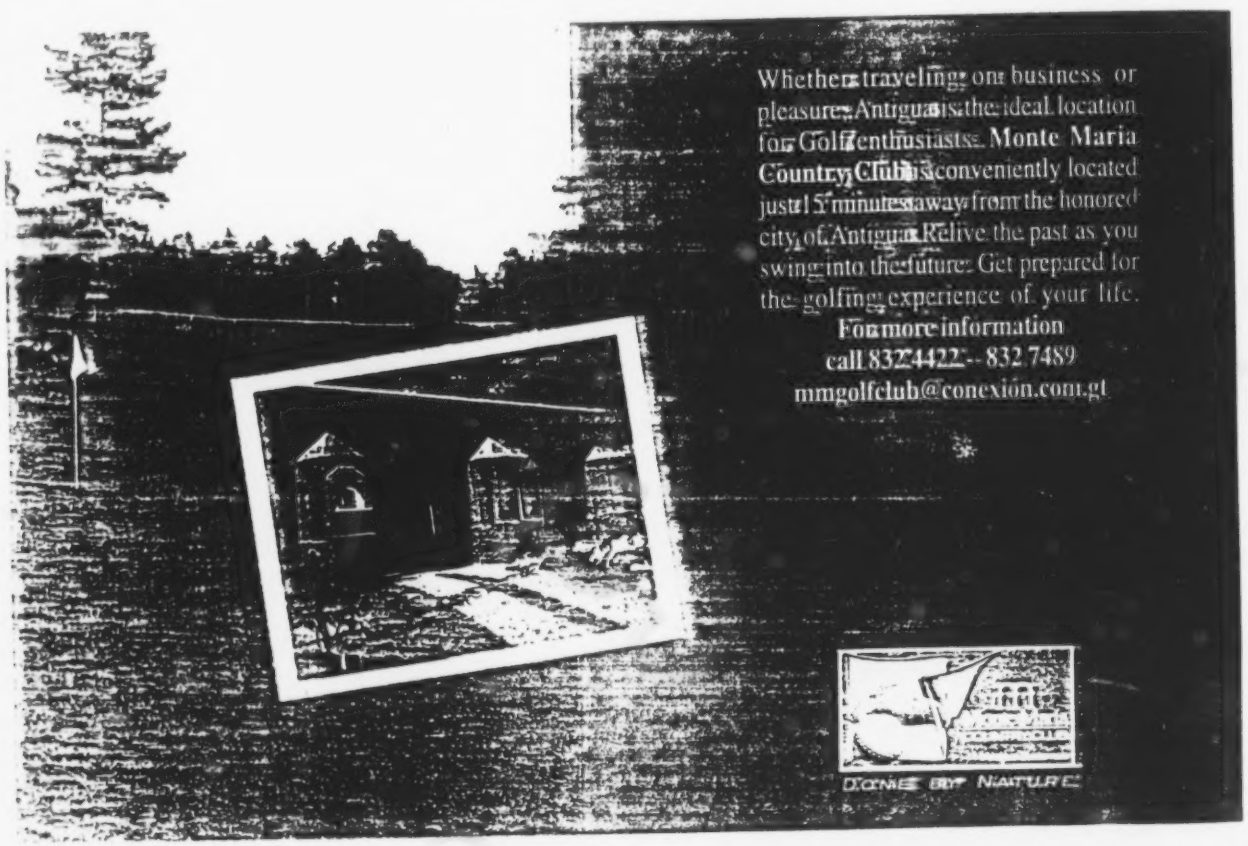
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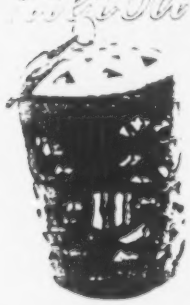
Folklore

F



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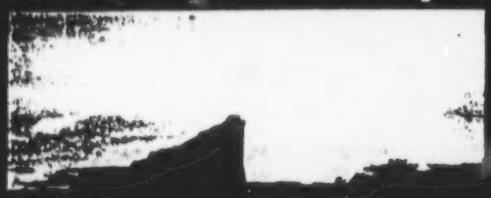
When Was the Last Time YOU Did Something for the First Time?



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Arts and Crafts

T

Primitivist painting has a long history in the town of San Juan Comalapa. Over 50 years ago Andrés Curruchiche began making this type of painting tradition in Comalapa.

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III. Students will view and discuss the film "El Norte." This film was recently re-released for general viewing. (See attached information)

Things to consider as students watch the film:

1. Where does the story begin?

2. When Enrique follows his father, his father speaks to him about the native people's situation in Guatemala. His words are very important. What does he say?

3. Why are the workers killed?

4. Notice the use of the family's native language.

5. Notice that there are some differences in the Spanish you hear in the film vs. the Spanish you have learned in class (i.e. the use of <u>vos</u> instead of <u>tú</u>, as well as a difference in the informal command forms).

6. Notice the symbolism in the film:
   a. round things (make a list)
   b. spider caught in web
   c. mother's necklace
   d. doors
   e. native flute music
   f. Rosa changing clothes before the journey
   g. fish in the basket
   h. father's hat

What others can you find?
How do these symbols add meaning to the story?

7. What compromises do Rosa and Enrique make to survive in the outside world? (Rosa resorts to stealing, they sell their mother's necklace, Enrique works as a waiter and becomes "Ricky," Enrique considers leaving Rosa to work in Chicago.)

8. Define: coyote
La Migra
pisto - lana
pocho
chicano

9. Contrast expectations vs. reality in the film.

10. Contrast Rosa and Enrique's life in Guatemala vs. that in "El Norte," both positive and negative aspects of each.

11. Rosa and Enrique do encounter kindness in some of the people they meet. What are some examples? (their coyote, Nacha, Mrs. Rogers, the doctor, even Moctezuma to some extent)

12. Notice the importance of <u>language</u> in the film.
(Rosa and Enrique are bilingual, they escape from the border patrol by using a language ploy, Enrique gets promoted because he learns English quickly, Rosa needs Nacha to communicate for her at the hospital.)

13. Nacha tells Enrique, "Rosa se puede morir, pero tú, ya estás muerto." (Rosa may die, but you are already dead!" What does she mean?

14. Discuss what Rosa means when she says "No hay lugar para nosotros." (There's no place for us.)

15. What is the significance of Enrique's situation at the end of the film.? (Recall his father's speech at the beginning of the film about "strong arms." And notice that he puts on his father's hat.)

16. Discuss the meaning of all the circular symbols in the film after viewing the ending.

17. Have your attitudes toward minorities and/or immigrants changed as a result of seeing this film? In what way?

ARTISAN ENTERTAINMENT ACQUIRES DOMESTIC RIGHTS TO CLASSIC AMERICAN INDEPENDENT FILM, EL NORTE

Landmark Film To Be Screened at Sundance With Plans for Fall '99 Re-Release

Sundance Festival, Park City, UT (January 24,1999) -- Artisan Entertainment has acquired all domestic rights to the 1984 Oscar-nominated American independent classic El Norte. The film, which Artisan plans to release this Fall, was written by Gregory Nava and Anna Thomas and was produced by Thomas and directed by Nava. The movie -- which received enormous critical acclaim when first released -- was originally distributed by Cinecom International, and the acquisition of El Norte reunites the film with Artisan Entertainment President Amir Malin, who was the President and CEO of Cinecom during the film's original release. A special screening of El Norte will be presented at this year's Sundance Film Festival on Sunday, January 24.

With accolades that ranged from being hailed as a masterpiece to being called "the first epic in the history of American independents," El Norte played for over one year in New York and Los Angeles during its initial theatrical run. The film depicts the heroic tale of Rosa and Enrique, a brother and sister whose parents were killed in a war, as they endure a treacherous journey to reach the American border and begin a new life in "El Norte," the United States. Notably, El Norte's gripping story led to it being the first the American independent film to receive an Oscar nomination (for Best Original Screenplay). More...

The Artisan theatrical re-release will be earmarked primarily toward a Latino audience, a demographic largely untapped during the original release of the film. In addition, Artisan plans to re-release a state-of-the-art version of El Norte for the home video and DVD markets. The company's dedication to Latino audiences had been illustrated earlier with the company's acquisition of Alejandro Amenabar's psychological thriller Open Your Eyes, starring Penelope Cruz and Eduardo Noriega II, as well as Wim Wenders' upcoming concert documentary, The Buena Vista Social Club. Wenders' film chronicles the friendship of the some of the greatest names in the history of Cuban music music from the 30's and 40's and their recent celebrated sell-out concerts in Amsterdam and New York's Carnegie Hall in the spring of 1998.

"The life that El Norte has had, and the way the film has continued to move people over the years is very gratifying to me and Anna," said Nava. "Unfortunately the situation depicted in El Norte has only gotten worse over the years and so in a way the story of Rosa and Enrique is more topical today then when it was first released. Anna and I are excited that a whole new generation of filmgoers will have a chance to see El Norte on the big screen." "In an era where the Latino population and language are so much a part of U.S. culture, El Norte is more relevant than ever," said Malin. "We are proud to have acquired these rights and believe that the triumph and hope that is portrayed in the film will resonate to audiences of all ethnic backgrounds. Personally, I am happy to be in business again with Greg and Anna."

In addition to its Oscar nomination, El Norte was named to the U.S. Library of Congress

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National Registry of Culturally Significant Films in 1995

Other top honors include
Winner of the 1984 Grand Prix des Ameriques Award at the Montreal Film Festival
Writers Guild of America nomination, Best Original Screenplay
Cannes Film Festival, Official Selection
Imagen Foundation, Imagen Award for Best Feature Film
Ondas Film Festival, Colon de Oro

The El Norte acquisition was brokered on behalf of Gregory Nava and Anna Thomas by Ken Kamins of ICM and by Amir Malin and Jeremy Barber on behalf of Artisan Entertainment

Artisan Entertainment Inc., is a diversified entertainment company that specializes in the development, production, acquisition, marketing and world-wide distribution of quality feature-length motion pictures. The company is comprised of four key groups: Artisan Pictures Inc., Artisan Home Entertainment Inc., Artisan Television and Artisan International. Artisan Entertainment Inc. controls a library of more than 6,300 titles which include the recently added the Spelling Entertainment Group catalogue of films and Terminator 2: Judgment Day, Reservoir Dogs, Dirty Dancing, Total Recall, The Piano and the successful Rambo series of films, as well as a library of widely recognized children's programming under the Family Home Entertainment brand. The company maintains offices in Los Angeles, New York and Dallas.

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main details

El Norte (1983)

Directed by
Gregory Nava

Writing credits
Gregory Nava
Anna Thomas (I)

Buy Related:
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Genre: Drama (more)

User Rating: 7.5/10 (191 votes)
Vote Here

Plot Summary: Mayan Indian peasants, tired of being thought of as nothing more than ... (more)

User Comments: THE BEST MOVIE MADE (more)

Cast overview:

Zaide Silvia Gutierrez	.... Rosa Xuncax
David Villalpando	.... Enrique Xuncax
Ernesto Gomez Cruz	.... Arturo Xuncax
Lupe Ontiveros	.... Nacha
Trinidad Silva	.... Mocte
Alicia del Lago	.... Lupe Xuncax
Abel Franco	.... Raimundo
Enrique Castillo	.... Jorge
Tony Plana	.... Carlos
Diane Civita	.... Alice Harper
Mike Gomez (I)	.... Jaime

rest of cast listed alphabetically

Sergi Dagliana	.... Olinto

[redacted]

Giuseppe Furia	.... Requiem
Pado Hende	.... Dilvo
Christina Kokubo	.... English teacher
George O'Hanlon	
Sabina Vannucchi	.... Rosa
Eraclio Zepeda	.... Pedro

Show More

Runtime: USA 139
Country: USA
Language: Spanish / English
Color: Color
Certification: USA:R / UK:15

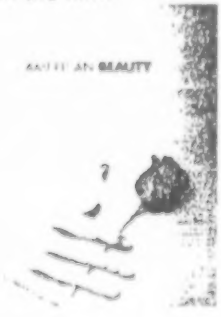
[redacted]

Your Vote Vote

You need to be a registered user of the IMDb to rate a movie

I have seen this movie and would like to submit a comment

Stand Out
Critical and popular favorite American Beauty stood out at this year's Golden Globes as the only film to win in mutiple categories. Be sure to check out the Official American Beauty Web Site, where you'll find a large library of photos, complete cast info, including interviews, and even e-cards with images from the film.



User Comments:

Paul A. Cook (1 *a* pablito.com)
Long Beach, California

Date: 11 December 1998
Summary: THE BEST MOVIE MADE

This film portrays the plight of 2 illegal immigrants, as they flee to the U.S. from Guatemala. But this movie is much, MUCH more than that. It cuts through all the stereotypes and attitudes the socially and economically privileged harbor against the foreigner. You need not know English or Spanish to understand this movie, because you feel everything so completely through the two main characters.

Anyone with any heart at all will enjoy this movie. With typical latin fatalism, this movie illustrates how people must sometimes bear the unbearable, because they have no other choice.

Check for other user comments

I've seen this movie and would like to comment on it

Message Boards

Discuss this movie with other users on IMDb message board for El Norte (1983)

Recommendations

If you like this title, we also recommend...

Platoon (1986)

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Soundtrack

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Update

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IV. Students will divide up into pairs or small groups to translate, from Spanish to English, short passages from the children's picture book entitled "Nosotros y Nosotras También Tenemos Derechos." ("We Have Rights, Too") (copy attached) Then, students will reunite as a class to share what they have translated in the order presented in the book. If there is time, they might want to color the pages they translated. (Even high school students still like to color!)

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Nosotros y nosotras también tenemos derechos

Universidad Rafael Landivar
Instituto de Lingüística y Educación

Autor: Luis Javier Crisóstomo
Ilustradora: Mayra Fong Rodriguez

Título original:
EX ITE' QOKLENA AWOYA Q'A EX AWOYA TXIN
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Autor: Luis Javier Crisóstomo
Traductor al castellano: Luis Javier Crisóstomo
Ilustradora: Mayra Fong Rodríguez
Diagramador: Carlos Rafael Figueroa
Corrector de tipografía y revisora de estilo: Ana L. Estrada C.

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Presentación

En el ambiente guatemalteco de hoy, mucho se habla de los derechos humanos, especialmente de los derechos de los niños y niñas.

Nosotros y nosotras también tenemos derechos, es un pequeño libro de lectura dirigido a estudiantes de la escuela primaria bilingüe, cuyo objetivo es lograr que el niño y la niña se vayan enterando de sus derechos a través de lecturas sencillas y fáciles de comprender y, al mismo tiempo, despertar el interés por la lectura y la escritura en su lengua materna.

Este libro se caracteriza por presentar textos sencillos, léxico conocido y un contenido que se refiere a cada uno de los derechos y algunos de los deberes de los niños y las niñas.

Se sugiere que el uso de este libro se complemente con lecturas individuales, lecturas en grupo, que sirvan como referencia para diálogos y reuniones con padres de familia y maestros.

También puede estar este libro de lectura en la biblioteca del aula para que los niños y niñas lo utilicen de manera libre.

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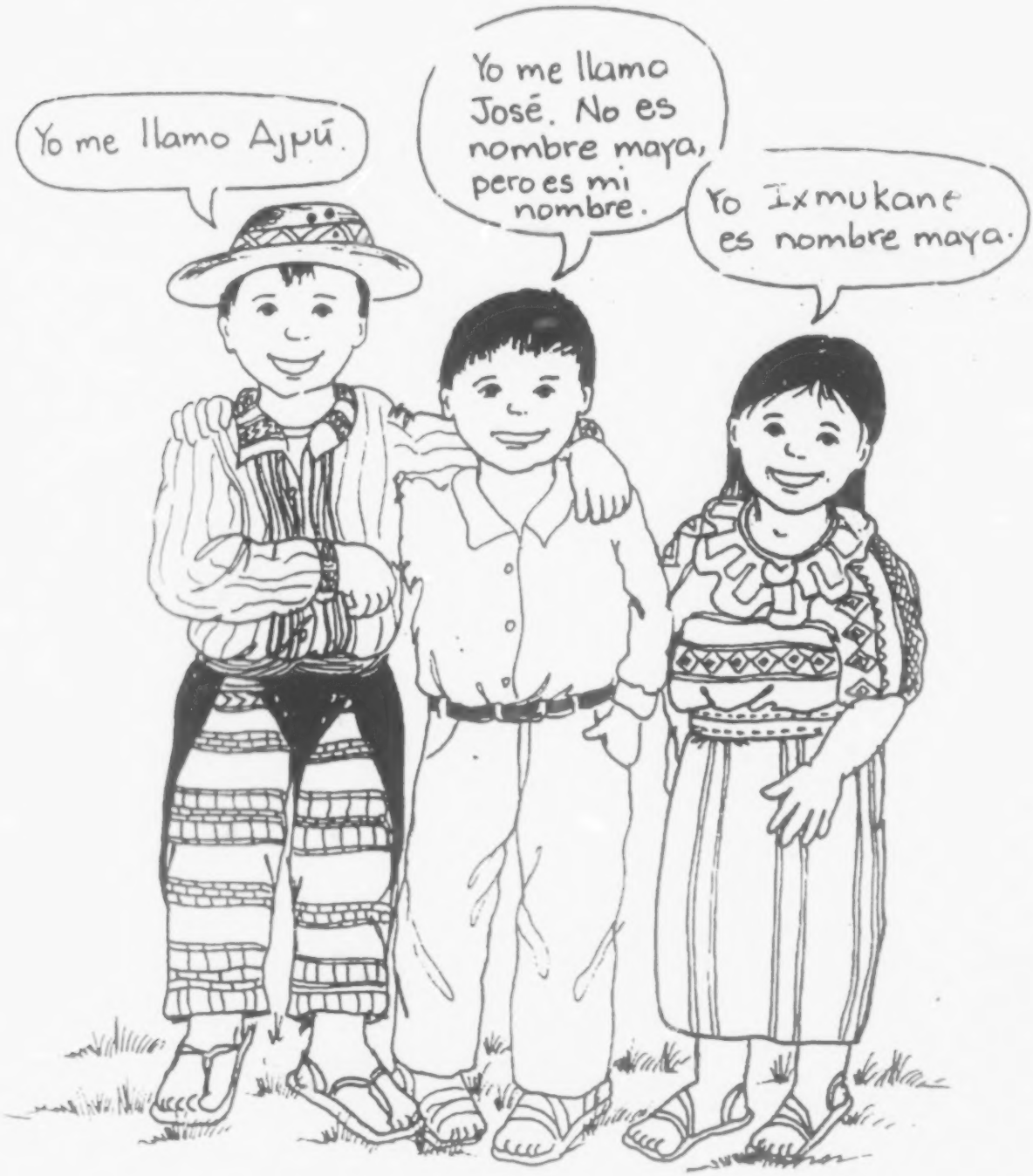
Todos los niños y niñas tenemos derechos.

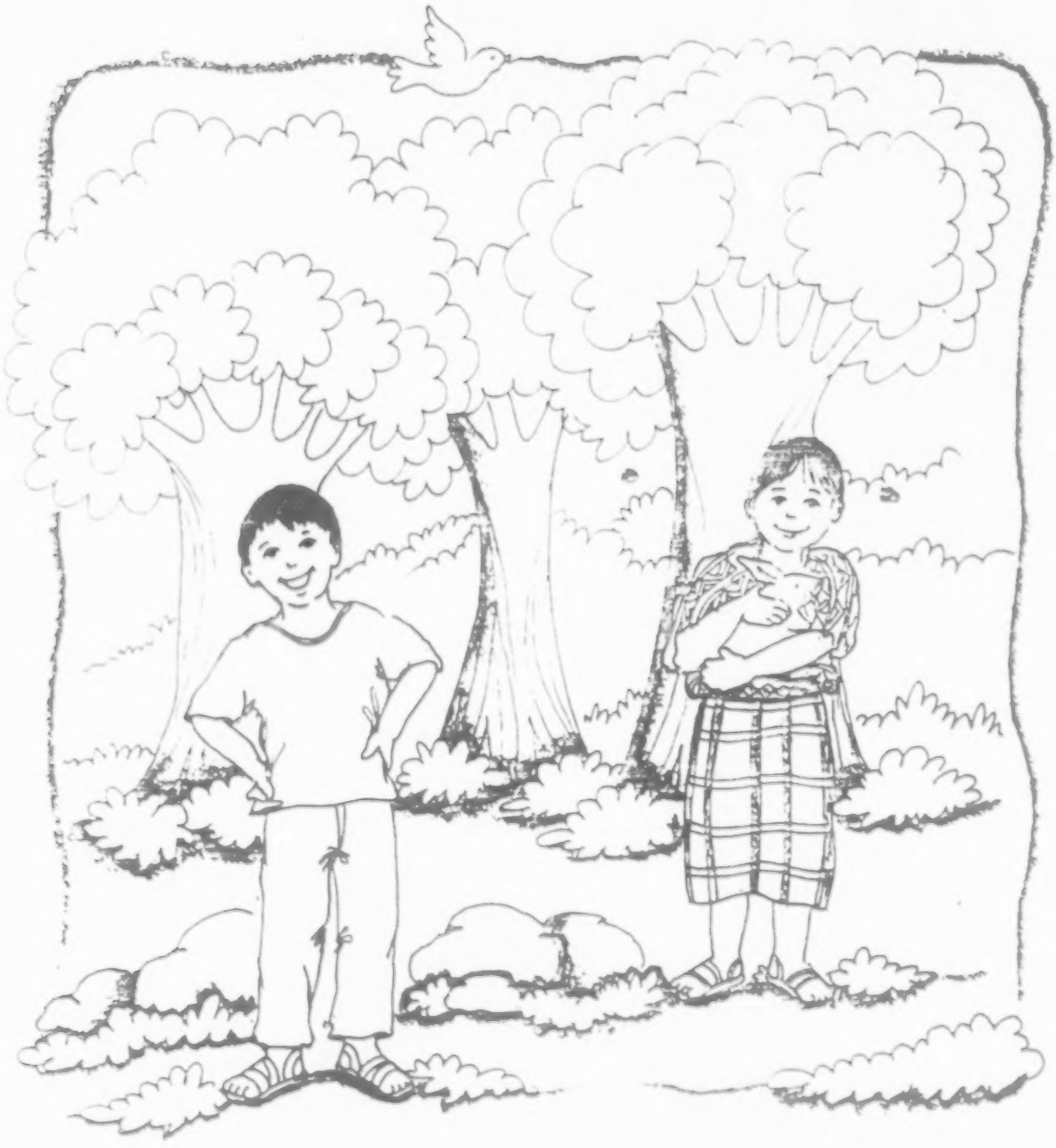
Tenemos derecho a la vida.
Por eso, la vida de nosotros y nosotras
debe ser protegida.

Tenemos derecho a tener un nombre.
Cuando papá y mamá seleccionen nuestro nombre,
deben inscribirnos en el Registro Civil.
Puede ser un nombre maya o cualquier otro.


Yo me llamo Ajpú.
Yo me llamo José. No es nombre maya, pero es mi nombre.
Yo Ixmukane es nombre maya.

Tenemos derecho a tener una nacionalidad.
Nací en la comunidad lingüística Mam;
por eso, soy parte del pueblo maya.
Los mayas son parte de Guatemala;
por eso soy guatemalteco.

Tenemos derecho a vivir en un lugar sano,
donde haya árboles,
donde todo sea alegría.



No podemos vivir
donde haya mucha basura ni
donde haya mucho ruido.

Tenemos derecho a conocer y practicar:
las artes de nuestro pueblo,
las costumbres,
los trabajos de nuestro pueblo.

Tenemos derecho a ser iguales:
Los niños y niñas garífunas,
los niños y niñas ladinos,
los niños y niñas mayas,
los niños y niñas xinkas.

Tenemos derecho a la salud.
No debemos permitir que la enfermedad nos invada.
Y si nos enfermamos,
que nos lleven al Centro de Salud.

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Tenemos derecho a alimentarnos bien, y
si estamos desnutridos, nos deben alimentar.
Debemos comer varias clases de verduras.
Debemos comer granos: frijol, arroz, maíz...
buen maíz para hacer ricas tortillas.
También debemos comer frutas: duraznos, manzanas, naranjas, etc.

En la escuela bilingüe,
debemos practicar el apoyo mutuo y la participación.

Podemos jugar en la casa con nuestros hermanos
y en la escuela con nuestros compañeros.
A través del juego, aprendemos a compartir
y a respetarnos unos a otros.

Tenemos derecho a conocer nuestra comunidad Mam:
¿Cuántos hablan Mam?
¿Cuál es su territorio?
¿Qué artes tiene?
¿Cuáles son sus costumbres?

Tenemos derecho a conocer Guatemala:
su territorio,
su flora y su fauna,
su producción,
sus pueblos y sus habitantes.

Tenemos derecho a conocer la historia,
tanto la de la comunidad Mam como
la de los ladinos, los garífunas y los xinkas.

También nosotros, los niños y las niñas especiales,
tenemos nuestros derechos.
Somos especiales los niños y las niñas
que no podemos ver,
que no podemos hablar,
que no podemos caminar.
Somos especiales, pero podemos
ir a la escuela y ayudar
a nuestros padres en muchas tareas del hogar.

Nos deben proteger contra las drogas y la violencia:
el cigarro nos afecta la salud;
si nos pegan, nos entristecemos;
si nos discriminan, no participamos;
si hay pleitos en casa, no crecemos felices ni sanos.

Tenemos derecho a que nos atiendan
antes que a todos los demás
cuando hay terremotos,
cuando hay huracanes,
y cuando hay inundaciones.

Muchos niños y niñas trabajamos
y ayudamos a nuestras familias
a ganar un poco de dinero.
Pero nos deben dar sólo el trabajo que podamos hacer para
que así también tengamos tiempo para jugar y estudiar.

Hay leyes que nos protegen.
El gobierno debe dar a conocer nuestros derechos
a las familias, a los patronos y a las instituciones
para que entre todos se construya el ambiente
que necesitamos los niños y las niñas.

Niños y niñas tenemos derecho a participar
en la escuela,
en la comunidad
y durante los juegos.

Tenemos derecho a conocer y practicar los valores
y la cultura de nuestros padres.

30

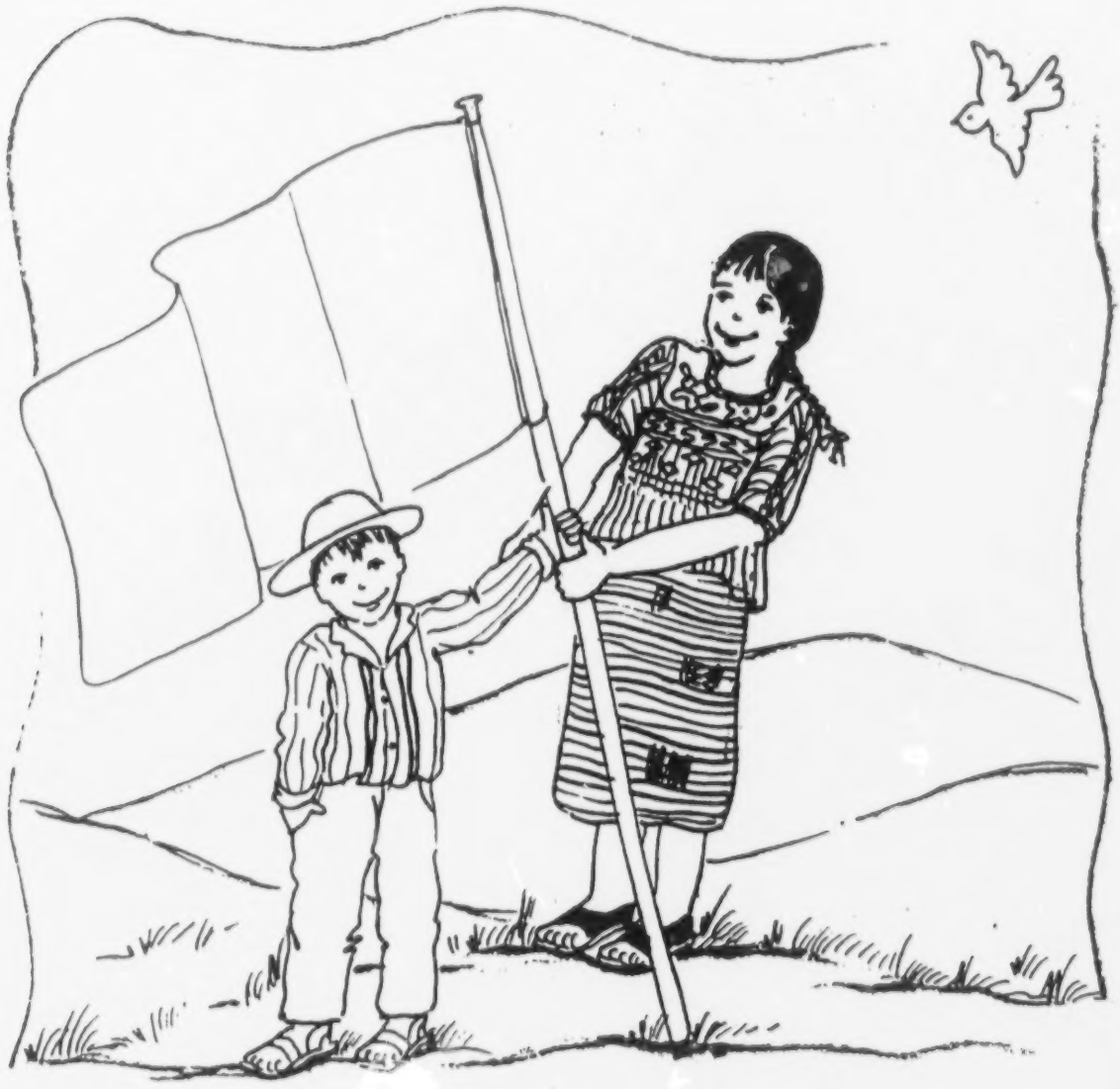
Tenemos derecho a vivir en paz:
queremos un pueblo
donde no haya discriminación,
donde no hayan guerras,
donde no haya pobreza,
donde no haya ignorancia.

Niños y niñas, ¡tengan mucho cuidado!... porque también tenemos deberes.

Debemos respetar a nuestros padres y
saludarles todos los días.

Debemos respetar a nuestros abuelos
y a nuestros hermanos.

Finalmente, tenemos la obligación de ayudar
para que Guatemala viva en paz.



V. Students will view teacher-generated slides from Guatemala and discuss such topics as daily life, housing, education, subsistence farming, religion, markets, textiles, and language.

VI. Students will listen to part of a tape of one of the twenty-one Maya languages just to get a feel for the sound of it. The tape is titled "Junp'iit Maaya" ("A Little Bit of Maya"), and it includes the alphabet, common phrases, and a few songs. (copy of accompanying booklet attached)

They will also have the opportunity to see and compare the Spanish version and the Kaqchikel version of a children's story called "Ixkab, the Little Girl who Reached the Stars and Happiness."

A Little Bit of Maya

JUNP'IIT MAAYA

JUNP'IIT MAAYA

A LITTLE BIT OF MAYA

This audio and accompanying written text
for beginners of the Yucatec Maya language
was produced, copyrighted
and made available
(with funds provided by the
United States Department of Education)
by
The Outreach Office of
The Duke-University of North Carolina
Program in Latin American Studies
Chapel Hill, North Carolina
1995

PREFACE

Jun P'iit Maaya - A little bit of Maya has been an ongoing project of the Outreach Office of the Duke-University of North Carolina Program in Latin American Studies for over two years. It was created because of an actual demand on the part of that large public engaged in all things Mayan. Many students, and community members, who are not able to take the Duke-UNC Program's Summer Intensive Introductory Course in Yucatec Maya nor able to enroll in a Maya language course in a nearby college or university, call our offices asking for a beginner's language tape. These people travel to the Yucatán peninsula, entertain Maya visitors in their US communities, or just want to know what Maya sounds like. This tape is for those and others who may find that "a little bit of Maya" takes them a long way or who, perhaps fascinated by the language, decide to pursue it further.

I would like to thank everyone who worked hard at various stages of this project. First of all my thanks to the four "voices" - Barbara MacLeod, Refugio Vermont Salas, Gretchen Whalen and Robert Howren who spent hours helping to write the material used and more hours inside a studio recording it. Thanks to Miguel Güémez for editing the material and checking and rechecking the Maya, to Todd Marshall for typing the text, to Silvia González for her layout and design and to Jerry Markatos for his endless hours of recording, editing, and looking for the perfect nuances to make this educational cassette the best we could collectively produce.

Sharon S. Mújica
Chapel Hill, North Carolina
September, 1995

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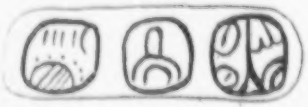
MAYA ALPHABET

The alphabet used in this text is as follows:



CONSONANTS:

Unglottalized:	Glottalized:
b	
ch	ch'
j	
k	k'
l	
m	
n	
p	p'
s	
t	t'
ts	ts'
w	
x	
y	'

(d, f, g, and r are borrowed from Spanish, in other words, we use these consonants to write Spanish words introduced into Maya).

VOWELS:

V (Neutral)	a	e	i	o	u
V' (Glottalized)	a'	e'	i'	o'	u'
VV (High long)	áa	ée	íi	óo	úu
VV (Low long)	aa	ee	ii	oo	uu
V'V (Rearticulated)	a'a	e'e	i'i	o'o	u'u

The following are some expressions and words which will be useful to students and travelers to the Yucatan Peninsula and Belize. (The Maya expression will be given first, then the English, then the Maya again.)

1. **Bix a beel?**
   How are you?

2. **Chéen beya' // chan ma'alob // tooj in wóol.**
   So-so // okay // I'm feeling good.

3. **Bix a k'aaba'?**
   What's your name?

4. **Tene' Refugio in k'aaba'.**
   As for me, my name is Refugio.

5. **Kux teech?**
   And you?

6. **Jach ki'imak in wóol in wilikech.**
   I'm very happy to see you.

7. **Beyxan teen.**
   Me too.

8. **Ba'ax ka beetik?**
   What are you doing?

9. **Chéen táan in xook // p'o' // janal // páak // je'elel.**
   I'm just reading // washing // eating // weeding // resting.

10. **Tu'ux a taal // tu'ux a kaajal?**
    Where do you come from? // Where is your hometown?

11. **Tene' Jo' in taal // Tene' Jo' in kaajal.**
    As for me, I'm from Mérida // As for me, Mérida is my hometown.

12. **Náach wa Jo' waye'?**
    Is Mérida far from here?

13. **Ma' seen náachi' // chan náach.**
Not very far // quite far.

14. **Tu'ux yaan junp'éel restaurant?**
Where is a restaurant?

15. **Bix u ya'ala'al casa ich Maya?**
How is "house" said in Maya?

16. **Tu'ux ka bin?**
Where are you going?

17. **Táan in bin xíinbal // maan // k'iiwik // tin wotoch.**
I'm going walking // shopping // to the square // to my house.

18. **Bix u k'aaba' le máako'?**
What is that person's name?

19. **Lelo' Juan u k'aaba'.**
His name is Juan.

20. **Ko'ox janal // uk'ul // meyaj // báaxal // óok'ot // Yucatán.**
Let's eat // have breakfast // work // play // dance // go to Yucatán.

21. **Ko'oten waye' Julio.**
Come here, Julio.

22. **Jayp'éel ja'ab yaan tech?**
How old are you?

23. **Tene' 20 ja'ab yaan ten.**
Me, I'm 20 years old.

24. **Ts'áaten junp'iit ja' // janal // ts'aak // uk'ul // sa'.**
Give me a little water // food // medicine // to drink (or breakfast) // atole.

MORE VOCABULARY

1.	bak'	*meat*
2.	ba'ax	*what*
3.	ba'al	*thing*
4.	ja'	*water*
5.	jats'uts	*nice*
6.	k'aaba'	*name*
7.	k'ab	*hand/arm*
8.	maan	*shopping*
9.	máan	*pass by*
10.	ma'	*no*
11.	naj	*house*
12.	waye'	*here*
13.	xanab	*shoe*
14.	bej	*road*
15.	beya'	*this way*
16.	beyo'	*that way*
17.	lela'	*this one*
18.	leti'	*he/she/it*
19.	letio'ob	*they*
20.	peek'	*dog*
21.	miis	*cat*
22.	teen	*I/I am*
23.	teech	*you/you are*
24.	te'ex	*y'all/ y'all are*
25.	beetik	*to do*
26.	meentik	*to do*
27.	te'ela'	*in this place*
28.	te'elo'	*in that place*
29.	k'iiwik	*square/plaza*
30.	chital	*to lie down*
31.	chilen	*lie down*
32.	ko'oj	*expensive*
33.	koonol	*selling*
34.	ko'ox	*let's go*
35.	ko'oten	*come*
36.	to'on	*we/we are*
37.	k'oja'anen	*I'm sick*
38.	k'oja'anech	*you're sick*
39.	k'oja'anil	*sickness*
40.	lool	*flower*
41.	nikte'	*may flower*
42.	no'oj	*right/correct*
43.	nojoch	*big*
44.	nook'	*clothing*
45.	p'óok	*hat*
46.	bóoch'	*snawl*
47.	k'uchul	*to arrive*
48.	b,in	*to go*
49.	taal	*to come*
50.	máak	*person*
51.	xiib	*male*
52.	xch'uup	*female*
53.	xch'úupal	*girl*
54.	ko'olel	*woman*
55.	xaman	*north*
56.	nojol	*south*
57.	lak'in	*east*
58.	chik'in	*west*

NUMBERS:

1.	jun	*one*
2.	ka'a	*two*
3.	óox	*three*
4.	kan	*four*
5.	jo'o	*five*
6.	wak	*six*
7.	uk	*seven*
8.	waxak	*eight*
9.	bolon	*nine*
10.	lajun	*ten*
11.	buluk	*eleven*
12.	ka'alajun	*twelve*
13.	óoxlajun	*thirteen*
14.	kanlajun	*fourteen*
15.	jo'olajun	*fifteen*
16.	waklajun	*sixteen*
17.	uklajun	*seventeen*
18.	waxaklajun	*eighteen*
19.	bolonlajun	*nineteen*
20.	k'aal	*twenty*

*This is the correct Mayan Equivalent of 1-20. However, today the Maya use the Spanish numbers beginning with four.

INVENTIONS

These represent translations in the Maya of the names of modern or introduced inventions. They are not in wide usage except as humorous expressions.

tsiimin k'áak' (horse) (fire) *locomotive*	literally	*"fire-horse"*
kiis buuts' (fart) (smoke) *automobile*	literally	*"smoke-fart"*
balak' t'iinchak ook *bicycle*	literally	*"roll, kick, pedal"*
xt'in k'áanil paax *guitar*	literally	*"stretched-string instrument"*
u nu'ukul ch'a' oochel *camera*	literally	*"instrument for taking images"*
náachil e'esaj oochel *television*	literally	*"faraway display of images"*

TONGUE TWISTERS

Ts'o'ok wa a ts'aik u ts'ook u ts'aak le ts'uulo'?
Have you given the master his last medicine?

J xiik ts'onta'ab u sak bak'el u tseem ch'oom yóok'l u igleesiail Dzan.
The vulture was shot in the chest over the church of Dzan.

Prophecies

These prophecies are part of the Maya oral tradition and have been passed down through many generations.

Ba'ax kun úuchul ti' u
kaajil Máayapaan?

What is going to happen to Mayapan?

Le jajal k'uj ku taal te' ka'ano'
chéen tu yo'lal k'eban bin t'aanak.
Chéen k'eban ken u ka'ansej.
Jach k'asa'an wiinik u ajk'atuno'ob.
Jach k'asa'an u ajts'its'ik peek'o'ob.

That true God who comes from heaven
only about sins he will speak.
He will only teach about sin.
His warriors are very bad people.
His mean dogs are very bad.

Nu'ukbesabae'ex a muk'yajte'ex u
kuuchil óotsilil, ku taal ta kaajale'ex.
Tumen le k'atuna' u k'atunil óotsilil.
U k'atunil ba'ate'el yéetel k'aas.

Be prepared to suffer that
poverty which comes to your town.
Because this next twenty year period,
it will be twenty years of poverty.
Twenty years of fighting evil.

Biin k'uchuk u k'iinil u yu'uba'al u t'aan
juntúul máak kex tu piktanil náachil yaan.
Teche' ki' kulukbalech ta wotoch táan
a wu'uyik u t'aan ba'ale' ma' táan
u páajtal a wilik tumen jach náach yaan.

There will be a day when you will be
able to hear somebody speaking even
though he's thousands of miles away.
You'll be pleasantly sitting in your house
hearing him speak but you won't be
able
to see him because he is far away.

Dialogue

1. **Ola Barbara.**
   Hi, Barbara.

2. **Ola Refugio, ki'imak in wool in wilikech.**
   Hello Refugio, I'm happy to see you.

3. **Beyxan teen. Tu'ux ka chéen bin?**
   Me too. Where are you going?

4. **Táan in bin xíimbal.**
   I'm going walking.

5. **Tene' táan in bin ts'a xook.**
   As for me, I'm going to teach.

6. **Táan a bin ts'a xook? Ba'ax ka ka'ansik?**
   You are going to teach? What do you teach?

7. **Maaya kin ka'ansik.**
   I teach Maya.

8. **A wojel wa tu'ux ku ko'onol iipilo'ob ye'etel p'óok?**
   Do you know where huipiles and hats are sold?

9. **Ma' in jach ojeli'. Ba'ale', in tuklike' te' tu noj najil ku koonolo'ob yani'.**
   I don't really know. The thing is, I think they're at that big store; they might have them.

10. **Uuchak wa a tsolik ten bix je'el u páajtal in bine'e'?**
    Could you explain to me how I can go there.

11. **Je'ele'. Ya'ab wa ken a mani'?**
    Sure. Will you buy many of them?

12. **Ma' jach ya'abi'. Kex óoxp'éel.**
    Not very many. About three.

13. **Utia'al a búukint wa teech?**
    Are they for you?

14. **Junp'éele' intia'al teen. Junp'éele' utia'al in kiik yéetel junp'éele' utia'al u kiik u yíicham.**
One is for me. One is for my sister and one is for her husband's sister.

15. **Kux túun p'óok?**
How about hats then?

16. **Lelo' míin chéen junp'éel ken in mani'.**
I think I'll just buy one of them.

17. **Je'elo' ma'alob. Xeen te' juntoja'.**
O.K. then. Go this way straight ahead.

18. **Jach juntoj kin bin?**
I just go straight ahead?

19. **Le ken k'uchukech te' tu'ux ku tu'uxta'al ts'íibbil ju'uno', ka tse'elel ta xno'oj.**
When you arrive there at the post office, you turn to your right.

20. **Náach wa te' tu'ux ku tu'uxta'al ts'íibbil ju'uno'?**
Is it far from the post office?

21. **Ma' náachi. Le ken k'uchukeche', chika'an.**
Not far. When you arrive there, you will see it.

22. **Wa bixe', kin k'áatik ti' wa ma'ax te'elo'.**
In case, I'll ask somebody there.

23. **Lelo' beyxan, pero in tuklike' ma' táan a sa'atal.**
Oh yes, but I think you won't get lost.

24. **Ma'alob túun Refugio. Dios bo'otik teech.**
Fine then, Refugio. Thank you.

25. **Mixba'al Barbara, ka xi'ik tech utsil.**
You're welcome, Barbara. Good luck to you.

26. **Beyxan teech.**
To you also.

End of Side I

HERE ARE SOME USEFUL WORDS:

a
PARTS OF THE BODY:

pool, jo'ol	*head*
u tso'otsel pool	*hair (of the head)*
chi'	*mouth*
ni'	*nose*
k'ab	*hand* or *arm*
pu'uch	*back*
ook	*foot*
ich	*eye* or *face*
in wich	*my eye* or *my face*
piix	*knee*
xikin	*ear*

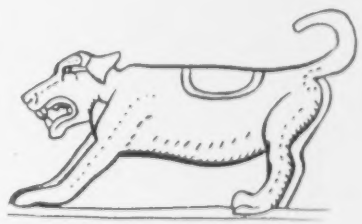
b
COLORS:

sak	*white*
chak	*red*
boox, éek'*	*black*
k'aank'an	*yellow*
ya'ax	*green*
ch'ooj	*blue*

*boox is the modern word for "black." éek' is archaic for "black," but its modern meaning is "dark," or "dirty."

c
ANIMALS:

kaax	*chicken*
t'eel	*rooster*
miis	*cat*
peek'	*dog*
tsíimin	*horse*
wakax	*cow*
k'éek'en	*pig*
úulum	*turkey*
t'u'ul	*rabbit*



d
FAMILY:

chiich	*grandmother*
suku'un	*older brother*
iits'in	*younger sibling*
kiik	*older sister*
áabil	*grandchild*
ilib	*daughter in law*
ja'an	*son in law*
paal	*child*
chaanpal	*baby*
chaanbal	*baby*
xch'uup	*female*
xch'úupal	*girl, unmarried woman*
xlóok'bayan	*older girl, young woman*
ko'olel	*woman, married woman*
xiib	*male*
xi'ipal	*boy*
táankelem	*young boy, young man, teenager*
máak	*man, person of either gender (people)*
wíinik	*man or person*

Here is a sample of *"I am"* phrases:

1.	**uk'ajen**	*I am thirsty*
2.	**wi'ijen**	*I am hungry*
3.	**k'iilkaben**	*I am sweating*
4.	**ke'elen**	*I am cold*
5.	**k'oja'anen**	*I am sick*
6.	**ka'ana'anen**	*I am tired*
7.	**saatalen**	*I am lost*
8.	**chilikbalen**	*I am lying down*
9.	**kulukbalen**	*I am sitting*
10.	**óotsilen**	*I am poor*
11.	**ayik'alen**	*I am rich*

Here are some more phrases:

1. **In k'áat bin Uxmal.**
   I want to go to Uxmal.

2. **Seen jats'uts le waya'.**
   This place here is very nice.

3. **Bixma'il, seen uts tin wich.**
   Of course, I like it very much.

4. **Bajux le ja'aso'?**
   How much is that banana?

5. **Ko'ox xíinbal k'íiwik.**
   Let's take a walk to the plaza.

6. **In k'áat in man ts'e'ets'ek ba'alo'ob.**
   I want to buy some things.

7. **Ba'ax a k'áat a manej?**
   What would you like to buy?

8. **Ma'alob túun, ko'ox.**
   O.K. then, let's go.

Conversation

1. **Ola xunáan.**
   Hello lady.

2. **Ola, bix a beel?**
   Hello, how are you?

3. **Chéen beya', kux teech?**
   So so, and you?

4. **Beyxan teen. Bix a k'aaba'?**
   Me, too. What's your name?

5. **Tene' Refugio in k'aaba', kux teech?**
   As for me, my name is Refugio, and you?

6. **Tene' Barbara in k'aaba'.**
   As for me, Barbara is my name.

7. **Jach ki'imak in wóol in k'ajóoltikech.**
   I'm very happy to know you.

8. **Beyxan teen. Tu'ux ka bin?**
   Me too. Where are you going?

9. **Táan in bin jmaan.**
   I'm going shopping.

10. **Beyxan teen. Tin bin jmaan.**
    Me too. I'm going shopping.

11. **Yaan in manik ja'as, ch'ujuk pak'áal, chakalja'as yéetel junp'éel oon.**
    I have to buy bananas, sweet oranges, mamey and an avocado.

12. **Tene' k'abéet ten p'aak, bu'ul, k'úum, iik, yéetel ixi'im.**
    As for me, I need tomatoes, beans, squash, chile and corn.

13. **Bajux a tuklik le ba'ax k'abéet in maniko'?**
    How much do you think it would cost, what I need to buy?

14. **Ma' seen ko'oji'. Kex $20.00 túumben pesos wale'.**
    Not very expensive. Around 20 new pesos perhaps.

15. **Teche' maas chan ya'ab ba'al ken a manej?**
    As for you, will you buy a few more things?

16. **Chan ya'ab, ba'ale' ma' jach ko'oj xa.**
    A few more, the thing is not very expensive.

17. **Tu'ux a taal teech, Barbara?**
    Where are you from, Barbara?

18. **Tene' Estados Unidos in taal.**
    As for me, I'm from the United States.

19. **Ma'alob túun páa'tik in bin. Ka xi'ik tech utsil.**
    Well then I guess I'll go. Good luck to you.

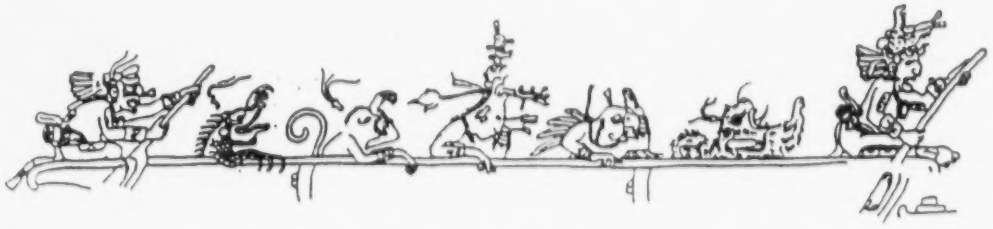
20. **Beyxan teech. Tu láak' k'iin.**
    To you also. Until another day.

21. **Tak tu láak' k'iin.**
    Until another day.

TOWNS

The names of the towns in Yucatán are related with the history of each place, and they are very descriptive. Here we have some of them:

❶	**Jo':**	*Five, the Maya name of Mérida.*
❷	**Tixkokob:**	*Place of snakes called xk'óok'ob, very common in Yucatán; nonpoisonous*
❸	**Dzilbilchaltún:**	*Written-on rock.*
❹	**Chichen Itzá:**	*The edge of the well of the Itza.*
❺	**Uxmal:**	*Ooxmáal, three times.*
❻	**Tekax:**	*Into the jungle.*
❼	**Saki':**	*The white falcon (Maya name of Valladolid)*
❽	**Acanceh:**	*Moaning deer.*
❾	**Oxkutzcab:**	*Three, tobacco plant, and honey.*
❿	**Tzucacab:**	*A portion of good soil.*



♫♪♫

SONGS

♪♫♪

Mayabil Ajxíimbal - El Caminante del Mayab

These lyrics are the inspiration of Antonio Mediz Bolio and the music of one of the greatest guitar players of the Trova Yucateca, Guty Cardenas (Augusto Cardenas Pinelo).

Lyrics: Antonio Mediz Bolio
Music: Guty Cárdenas Pinelo
Trans.: Refugio Vermont Salas

Yuum Ajxíinbal, Yuum Ajxíinbal
Ka bin ti' le bejo'obo'
Ti' le úuchben bejo'obo'
U bejil Mayab...

Chúunk'in ka wilik u k'áak'il
U xiik' juntúul Xtakay
Ka wilik yéetel áak'ab,
U léets'bal yich Xkóokay.

Yuum Ajxíinbal, Yuum Ajxíinbal
Ka wu'uyik ok'om k'aay
U k'aay chan ch'ooj Tsuutsuy
Ka wu'uyik yel u yawat
Juntúul Pu'ujuy.

♪ ♫ ♪ ♫

Yuum Ajxíinbal, Yuum Ajxíinbal
Ka bin ti' le bejo'obo'
A'al ten wa ta wilaj
U chikpajal...

Bey junp'éel sasak múuyal
Jtaale' ka jka'a binij
Wá xan ta wu'uy junp'éel k'aay
Je'ebix u k'aay ko'olel.

Yuum Ajxíinbal, Yuum Ajxíinbal
Te' yóok'ol xan in beelo'
Sak múuyal tin wilaj
Tin wu'uyaj xan le k'aayo'
Juntúul óotsil máaken.

Yuum Ajxíinbal, Yuum Ajxíinbal.

Songs

Kin wa'alik ti' tech - Te vengo a decir

This song is a translation in Maya of the song "Te Vengo a Decir," "I'm coming to Tell You" in Spanish. It is sung in the evangelical churches of Spanish speaking countries.

Kin wa'alik ti' tech
Kin wa'alik ti' tech
Kili'ich ajlojil
Jach in yaamaech
Jach in yaamaech
Tu jaajil in wóol.

Tene' tak in k'aay
Tene' tak in k'aay
Tyóo'lal ki' óolal
Tak xan in wok'ol
Tak xan in wok'ol
Tyóo'lal ki'imak óol.

Kin wa'alik ti' tech
Kin wa'alik ti' tech
Jach u jaajilil
In yaamaech yuntsil
In yaamaech yuntsil
Tu jaajil in wóol.

Kin wa'alik ti' tech
Kin wa'alik ti' tech
Jach u jaajilil
In yaamaech yuntsil
In yaamaech yuntsil
Tu jaajil in wóol

♪ ♫ ♫ ♫ ♪ ♫

Ootsil chichan ch'íich' - The Poor Little Bird

This song speaks about a little bird who wants to get married but he was very poor and when he said this, different kinds of animals came to help him. The little fish that was at the edge of the ocean answered that he would give him money for the wedding. The cow that was in the field said he would give the bread or the cake. The caterpillar on the leaf of the plant would make a dress. The cardinal that was in a branch of the *ramón* tree answered that he would give the ornament for the bride's hair. The armadillo, who was under the ground, told him that he would give the music.

Ootsil chichan ch'íich'
U k'aat ts'o'ok(o)l u beel
Ba'ale' ba'ax u'usik
Mina'an u taak'nil
Ku núukik chan kay
Yanil tu jáal ja'
Uuchuk ts'o'okol beel
Teen ts'áik u taak'nil.

Ootsil chichan ch'íich'
U k'aat ts'o'ok(o)l u beel
Ba'ale' ba'ax u'usik
Mina'an u siintail
Ku núukik xchak ts'íits'ib
T'uchlik tu k'ab óox
Uuchuk ts'o'okol beel
Teen ts'áik u siintail

Ootsil chichan ch'íich'
U k'aat ts'o'ok(o)l u beel
Ba'ale' ba'ax u'usik
Mina'an u waajil
Ku núukik xnuk wakax
Xaklik ti' chak'an
Uuchuk ts'o'okol beel
Teen ts'áik u waajil

Ootsil chichan ch'íich'
U k'aat ts'o'ok(o)l u beel
Ba'ale' ba'ax u'usik
Mina'an u paaxil
Ku núukik chan weech
Yanil yáanal lu'um
Uuchuk ts'o'okol beel
Teen ts'aik u paaxil

Ootsil chichan ch'íich'
U k'aat ts'o'ok(o)l u beel
Ba'ale' ba'ax u'usik
Mina'an u nook'il
Ku núukik chan xnook'ol
Tak'lik tu le' xíiw
Uuchuk ts'o'okol beel
Teen ts'áik u nook'il.

Ootsil chichan ch'íich'
U k'aat ts'o'ok(o)l u beel
Ba'ale' ba'ax u'usik
Jach mixba'al yaan ti'
Ku núukik ba'alche'o'ob
Yaanil ti' yáax k'áax
To'one' ki'imak k ool
To'on ts'áik tuláakal.

VII. Students will read and discuss two poems by Humberto Ak'abal, an indigenous Guatemalan poet. The two poems are "And Nobody Sees Us" and "The Mecapal."

Y NADIE NOS VE

La llama de nuestra sangre arde,
inapagable
a pesar del viento de los siglos.

Callados,
canto ahogado,
miseria con alma,
tristeza acorralada.

¡Ay, quiero llorar a gritos!

Las tierras que nos dejan
son las laderas,
las pendientes:
los aguaceros poco a poco las lavan
y las arrastran a las planadas
que ya no son de nosotros.

Aquí estamos
parados a la orilla de los caminos
con la mirada rota por una lágrima...

Y nadie nos ve.

AND NOBODY SEES US

The flame of our blood burns
inextinguishable
in spite of the wind of centuries.

We do not speak,
our songs caught in our throats,
misery with spirit,
sadness inside fences.

Ay, I want to cry screaming!

The lands they leave for us
are the mountain slopes,
the steep hills:
little by little the rains wash them
and drag them to the valleys
that are no longer ours.

Here we are
standing on roadsides
with our sight broken by a tear. . . .

And nobody sees us.

"And Nobody Sees Us"
Discussion Questions

1. What is the effect of using the terms "flame" and "blood" in the first line?

2. Explain "We do not speak . . " Why not?

3. What reality about the Maya's land does Ak'abal refer to?

4. What is the effect of the last line?

El Mecapal	The Mecapal
Para	For
nosotros	us
los indios	indians
el cielo termina	the sky ends
donde comienza	where the headstrap
el mecapal.	begins.

1. What is a <u>mecapal</u>?

2. For what is it used?

3. What does it symbolize in this poem?

4. What is the double meaning of <u>cielo</u> in the Spanish

version? How does that add to the poignancy of the poem?

5. These poems were originally written in the Maya language of K'iche'. Compare the Spanish and the English versions of the poems. How do they differ? Why isn't the English version a word-for-word translation?

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